

Strengthening Family Resilience in the Community of Faith:
A Christian Education Model for Korean American Families

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This dissertation, written by

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Abstract

Strengthening Family Resilience in the Community of Faith: A Christian Education Model for Korean American Families

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The purpose of this study is to provide a Christian education model for Korean American families. In the process of acculturation, they experience not only discrimination in the society, but also conflicts within the family due to a generation gap and structural changes. The thesis for the dissertation is that a Christian family education model integrating the psychological concept of family resilience, Korean cultural family values, and Christian understandings of the family can empower and increase resilience in Korean American Christian families.

Resilient individuals and families successfully cope with adversity and grow from the experience instead of becoming dysfunctional, and resilience is nurtured through both personal strengths and relationships with others in a community. Family resilience involves family processes of belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication/problem-solving processes. The concept also emphasizes the inherent strengths of families and cultural values that shape the families' appraisal process.

The Korean traditional family values and structures contain some significant qualities that can nurture resilience: familism, cooperation, mutual interdependence, and resilience in women.

The Christian faith becomes the core of belief systems that nurture family resilience. It illuminates the deeper meanings and sacredness of family life; God's movement is revealed in the details of family life. Through family spirituality, the members practice a way of life that recognizes and participates in God's love and grace.

Integrating these theories, the Christian education model for Korean American families seeks to nurture family resilience. The model is grounded on Christian understandings of the family which expand families' perspectives of adversity and of life. It identifies and enhances inherent strengths of the Korean American family, and the history of the early Korean immigration and the traditional family values serve this purpose. It enriches a family's resources by providing emotional, instrumental, and informational support. The key to promoting family resilience is the context of the faith community. The families are strengthened in their relationships with other families in the extended family of God.

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INTRODUCTION

My family immigrated to the U.S. when I turned sixteen. Leaving my friends, school, church, and the country was not easy, but adapting to the new culture in a foreign land was far more challenging. It was tough for everyone in the family. My parents suffered from physical labor which was too rigorous for their age, and their four children struggled to learn the new language while facing racism at school. One thing that stands out in my memory regarding family life is the evening time. After dinner, we gathered in the living room and had a family worship service, a weekly practice in Korea that turned into a daily routine. Afterwards, over a bowl of fruits we would chat on and on, about the things that were important, funny, sad, and even “stupid.” During that dark period, we felt close to one another ever more than we did before, and my family sustained me to stand strong in the new land.

There was a popular saying among Korean immigrants back then: “After ten years of immigrant life, most immigrant families end up with a problem. They have either a sick adult or a problem child.” Ten years later, my family did also encounter a problem. My mother was diagnosed with severe rheumatoid arthritis, a genetic disorder flared up by intense labor and stress. Although my family did not turn out to be an ideal problem-free immigrant family, we stayed together through the tough times and still continue to support one another.

When I started seminary right after college and began serving at a Korean immigrant church as a Christian education director, the struggles of immigrant families spoke most strongly to me. It was heartbreaking to see parents who were deeply

concerned about their children, yet feeling too weary and inadequate to approach their children who felt confused, neglected, and lost. Ever since these experiences, I was drawn to Korean immigrant families and their pains, and this project is the outcome of the long years of my passion for them.

Korean American, immigrant families struggle with multiple crises. All immigrants in the United States inevitably face the task of acculturation.¹ This process becomes very strenuous and difficult for Korean Americans because of vast cultural differences between the Korean and dominant U.S. culture and because of persisting hostility toward Asians in general. First generation Korean immigrants experience downward job mobility in comparison to the jobs they held in Korea, social status change, and hardships of economic survival.² They tend to stay close to their ethnic people and culture, often isolating themselves from the dominant culture and refusing to learn its culture and language.³ Second generation Korean Americans are caught between two extreme cultures, the Asian and the Western so that they “often face problems of existential ambivalence and identity.”⁴ These individual crises are further magnified and turned into sources of conflicts within the family.

Conflicts between the first and the second generation Korean Americans are multifaceted. As children acculturate faster than their parents to the dominant society, they become the spokesperson of the family, which causes role-reversal and loss of

¹ Acculturation refers to “phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” as well as “a change in the psychology of the individual.” See John W. Berry and David L. Sam “Acculturation and Adaptation,” in *Handbook of Cross-cultural Psychology*, vol. 3: *Social Behavior and Applications*, ed. John Berry, Marshall Segall and Cigdem Kagitcibasi, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997), 294.

² Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 43.

³ Pyong Gap Min, “Korean Americans,” in *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*, ed. Pyong Gap Min (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 214-15.

⁴ Hurh, 81.

parental authority.⁵ Cultural difference as well as language and generation gap between the two generations intensifies this crisis. As the second generation adheres to U.S. values of “individual interest, rights, intimacy, and independence,” the first generation holds onto Korean values of “family interest, duty, obligation, and mutual dependence among kin based on the social ethic of Confucianism.”⁶ Thus, both parties experience great dissonance in their beliefs and values. Parents’ demands for academic excellence in pursuit of social mobility can also cause a dilemma. In addition to high anxiety and stress in children, increasing numbers of Korean youth gang crimes and problem students are some of the side effects.⁷

Economic hardship pushes Korean wives to have full time jobs and this triggers two major problems within the family. First, many wives are burdened by their double roles since they have a job and are also solely responsible for household tasks. Since husbands are usually unwilling to share the tasks due to traditionally assigned gender-roles within the family, Korean working women spend twelve more hours per week on chores than their husbands.⁸ Secondly, it also causes marital conflict as the wives’ increased economic power threatens the husbands, who have had culturally dominant positions in the family. Also, frustration with their low social status due to immigration and long hours of work cause marital discord.⁹ Statistics provide evidence that domestic

⁵ Carola Suarez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, *Children of Immigration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 76-77.

⁶ Hurh, 83-84.

⁷ Ibid., 94-101. Also see Pyong Gap Min, “Korean American Families,” in *Minority Families in the United States: A Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Ronald L. Taylor, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998).

⁸ Pyong Gap Min, “Korean Immigrant Wives’ Overwork,” *Korean Journal of Population and Development* 21 (1992): 121-43.

⁹ Pyong Gap Min, “Korean American Families,” 197-99.

violence in Korean families is the highest among Pacific Asians in the Los Angeles area, and that the battering has started or intensified since immigration.¹⁰

The elders experience status decline within the family as they are assigned to care for the grandchildren and do household chores instead of being subjects of honor and respect. Their dissatisfaction also arises from “financial difficulties and the lack of control over their living conditions,” caused by immigration.¹¹

In addition to these public and well-documented matters, there are also concealed, yet pervasive family issues: weakened family rituals and traditions that are thus less effective for shaping and sustaining the cultural and religious identity of individuals, lack of value and moral teaching as the family pursues the American dream, shallow and superficial interactions between generations due to cultural and language gaps, and increased blame and shame placed upon one another for failure and hardships in immigrant life.

The context of Korean American immigrant families highlights the urgent need for assistance. They need to be empowered to be strong and healthy so that they can function effectively amid stressful situations. Family members need to understand, support, and encourage one another so that they will successfully and competently adapt to the new society. They must flourish and grow as they re-root themselves in this foreign soil. Korean immigrant families in crises deserve direct and immediate attention, and this project is a response to such need.

Korean American families can be aided by exploring and employing the concept of family resilience. Researches inform individuals that resilient individuals and families

¹⁰ Maria P. P. Root, “Women,” in *Handbook of Asian American Psychology*, ed. Lee C. Lee and Nolan W. W. Zane (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 223.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 185-86.

successfully cope with adversity and grow from the experience instead of becoming dysfunctional as a result of it. Rather than viewing the family as a weak entity that causes dysfunction in its members, the concept emphasizes the inherent strengths of families. Family resilience involves family processes of belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication/problem-solving processes.¹² Promoting these processes can nurture resilience in Korean immigrant families.

Family has long been recognized in religious education circles as a primary place where education occurs. One of the early figures was Martin Luther, who emphasized the importance of family and, during a period when celibacy was exalted as an ideal, maintained that it is the role of families to shape godly people.¹³ Horace Bushnell's focus on family education affirms the significance of the family as the primary place of nurture and parents as the primary educators.¹⁴ At the center of Christian family education have been theological and biblical understandings of family. In addition to Pope John Paul II, Protestant scholars Judith Kovacs, Sang H. Lee, David Clark, and Brad Wigger articulate their perceptions, which enrich our understandings of God's intention for family and its relationship to the larger world.¹⁵ Ernest Boyer, Dolores Leckey, Marjorie Thompson, and Wendy Wright's explorations of family spirituality advocate the use of the ordinariness of family life to build Christian characters in its members, so that they would

¹² Froma Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

¹³ See F. V. N. Painter, *Luther on Education* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889).

¹⁴ Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: C. Scribner, 1861; reprint, Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1994).

¹⁵ See Judith Kovacs, "Faith and Family in Biblical Perspective," and Sang H. Lee, "The Importance of the Family: A Reformed Theological Perspective," in *Faith and Families*, ed. Lindell Sawyers (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1986); David K. Clark, "Biblical and Theological Foundations of Marriage and the Family," in *Handbook of Family Religious Education*, ed. Blacke J. Neff and Donald Ratcliff (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1995); J. Bradley Wigger, *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Grace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

grow into mature persons and competent individuals who are deeply related to others.¹⁶

However, these profound religious education theories have not been adapted for the Korean American family.

Asian American religious educators are well aware of acculturation struggles and conflicts in the immigrant family. Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng underscores ethnocultural identity and generational and gender issues, and provides clues for developing opportunities for educational ministry, particularly with Asian families.¹⁷ Grace Sangok Kim also addresses conflicts between immigrant parents and youth as well as the issue of self-identity. She offers parenting skills to better communicate and relate to each other and affirms the importance of bicultural integration as a positive self-identity.¹⁸ Young Lee Hertig presents an insightful description of the “cultural tug of war” between the first and second generation Koreans in the family and in the church based on her twenty years of experience.¹⁹ Yet, they do not provide a comprehensive family education theory. There is a lack of religious education resources that can support Korean immigrant families to deal with their pains and issues and to identify and utilize their resources.

Given all of this, there is a need for a Christian education model that is intentional about family resilience and religious educational perspectives on the family. By applying

¹⁶ Ernest Boyer, *A Way in the World: A Family Life as Spiritual Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Dolores Leckey, *The Ordinary Way: A Family Spirituality* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982); Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1989); Wendy Wright, *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life*, rev. ed. (Leavenworth, KS: Forest of Peace Publishing, 1994).

¹⁷ See Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, “Pacific-Asian North American Religious Education,” in *Multicultural Religious Education*, ed. Barbara Wilkerson (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1997), 190-234; and “Family and Education from an Asian -North American Perspective: Implications for the Church’s Educational Ministry,” *Religious Education* 87, no. 1 (winter 1992): 52-61.

¹⁸ Grace Sangok Kim, “Asian North American Immigrant Parents and Youth: Parenting and Growing Up in a Cultural Gap,” and “Asian North American Youth: A Ministry of Self-Identity and Pastoral Care,” in *People On the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community*, ed. David Ng (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996).

¹⁹ Young Lee Hertig, *Cultural Tug of War: The Korean Immigrant Family and Church in Transition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001).

these theories in constructing a model, Korean American families can be empowered to nurture themselves and each family member.

My thesis is that a Christian family education model integrating the psychological concept of family resilience, Korean cultural family values, and Christian understandings on family can empower and increase resilience in Korean American Christian immigrant families that are struggling with the crises of breakdown and turmoil in the midst of the acculturation process. The model focuses on identifying and increasing the resources of Korean American Christian families through education ministry in order to cultivate resilience—capabilities not only to maintain competence and healthy functioning in persisting stress situations, but also to learn and grow from them through communal efforts.

My assumption is not that all families are naturally nurturing and empowering. Family is a significant place in which individuals are socialized and raised; a safe and affirming family nurtures individuals most effectively. Yet, because it is such a crucial context, it can do just the opposite; the family can be extremely destructive and damaging to self-development if it does not function in a healthy way. Compared to other social units that are based on friendship, the family is the basic unit into which one is born. Whereas humans have freedom to relate voluntarily to people in the former, the familial relationships are involuntary, inescapable, and confining. Therefore, once the relationship becomes domineering and destructive, its impact on the members is fatal, and a vicious cycle can be perpetuated.

It is the same with the faith community. I maintain that the church has an inseparable relationship with the family in nurturing and sustaining healthy families.

Depending on the nature of the church, however, it can either build up or shatter individuals and families. Distorted doctrines, which are often identified and idolized as the divine intention, become the basis of exclusivism. By absolutizing the partial religious stance, the church can shun certain groups of people and leave them permanently scarred.

I am neither romanticizing nor absolutizing the ability of the family and the church to nurture recent immigrant communities. Rather, my point is that, because of the family's significant role in individual development, families need to be strengthened. They must be empowered to nurture rather than to destroy.

The primary audience for this project is pastors and educators at Korean American churches. I hope that as leaders they will be more sensitive to the family as a unit within the congregation and address the concerns and needs of families in their ministerial work. The focus is on families with first generation parents and the 1.5 and second generation children, because the tension caused by the cultural differences between them is tremendous, and their adaptation stress can be most acute. In the families composed of later generations, the intergenerational conflicts would be somewhat less intense and their issues slightly different. Although a large portion of the theories can be implied for their context, not all will be relevant.

I begin this project by making a survey of Korean American immigration history in Chapter 1. Exploring the background of the Korean immigration movement, the life of early immigrants and their families, and the role of the Korean immigrant church, not only traces our ethnic roots in the U.S., but also provides legacies of strength and resilience for the family today.

Chapter 2 focuses on the present context of immigration and the Korean immigrant family. I make a social analysis of the present immigration wave, which includes economic, cultural, and social adaptation as well as psychological adjustment and religious life. Then, I try to paint a very vivid picture of the Korean family based on interviews. I articulate issues at stake, their crisis, agony, assets, bliss, and hopes. A close investigation of the Korean immigrant family identifies a pressing need for family religious education.

In order to construct a Christian education model for Korean American families, I turn to three sources. In Chapter 3, the psychological concept of family resilience will be presented as a basic frame of the education model for Korean families facing adjustment and adaptation challenges. The survey includes stress and coping theory, relational competence which produces resilience, and Froma Walsh's key processes of resilient families. The family resilience theory claims that crises and challenges placed upon the family can be overcome through key family processes that include belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication/ problem solving. Family resilience will redirect the family's focus from inevitable problems to various family functioning and resources that enables its members to respond successfully to crises and challenges.

In Chapter 4, I survey traditional Korean family values and structure, and identify their inherent strengths: familism, mutual dependency, extended family, virtue and proper behavior in human relationship, and women's resilience. These traits not only articulate positive dimensions of Korean culture that will engender resilience, but also highlight the importance of collective effort in dealing with family crises that emerge in the immigrant

context. They further advocate the function of the faith community as an extended family which Korean immigrants have left behind in their home country.

Chapter 5 examines Christian understandings of family. They consist of biblical and theological understandings of family presented by Bradley Wigger and the concept of the family as “domestic church.”²⁰ I also present Horace Bushnell’s focus on family as the primary context of faith education and family spirituality as a way of family education. They inform deeper understandings of the family and articulate practical implications for seeing and participating in God’s action in the family life. Their wisdom provides a paradigm to shattered values and images of the immigrant family. In conversation with these theories, I build a Christian education model for Korean American families.

In Chapter 6, drawing from and integrating the three sources, I will propose Family Resilience as a Christian Education Model for Korean American Families. This model will seek to nurture family resilience through family educational ministry. It will identify and enhance families’ resources, both inherent and social. The resources will include Christian understandings of the family, key family processes, and traditional Korean family values. The context of the model will be the faith community which promotes resilience in families through collaborative effort.

²⁰ Catholic Church, Pope, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Episcopate to the Clergy and to the Faithful of the Whole Catholic Church Regarding the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (Pretoria, South Africa: Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 1981).

Chapter 1

HISTORY OF THE EARLY KOREAN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION AND FAMILY LIFE

The history of Korean immigration to the U. S. can be divided into three phases.¹ This chapter deals with the history of the first wave of Korean immigration. The primary purpose is to trace the historical roots of Koreans in the U.S. and also to delineate sources of strengths and resilience in order to provide insights into contemporary Christian education for Korean American families.

Beginning with pull and push factors of immigration and early immigrants' life in the sugarcane fields, I explore their religious and political activity, which sustained them through harsh and desolate life in a foreign land. Education at the early immigrant church will be studied in detail. The family life of early immigrants is illuminated largely through immigrant women, as revealed in their oral histories and biographies.

The Early Korean Immigrants and Life on Sugar Plantations

The first wave of Korean immigration began in 1903 as laborers came to sugar plantations in Hawaii. The immigration of Korean laborers came to a halt by Japan in 1905, the year she made Korea a protectorate, in her effort to "curb Korean labor competition with Japanese workers in Hawaii and to cut off the source of Korean-

¹ See Hurh, *Korean Americans*, 33, 32, 46. During the first wave (1903-1924), 7,226 sugarcane laborers and 1,100 picture brides came until the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 ended the immigration of all Asians. The second wave began in 1950, allowing 14,027 wives of American servicemen and Korean War orphans to enter the States. The Immigration Act of 1965 opened the door for a new wave of family immigration. Beginning with 2,165 people in 1965, the number increased each year and reached a peak in 1987 of 35,849. From then on, the number has been decreasing and return migration began in 1980, due greatly to the burgeoning economy in Korea. However, since Korea suffered an economic turmoil in 1998, immigration to the U.S. has been gradually increasing in the last few years.

independence activities in the United States.”² During 1903-1905, therefore, the total number of immigrants reached only 7,226, and consisted of 6,048 men, 637 women, and 541 children.³ They were mostly from urban areas and their backgrounds were diverse: farmers, common laborers, government clerks, students, policemen, miners, discharged soldiers, and some scholars and students.⁴

Push and Pull Factors

Korean immigration was initiated by Hawaiian plantation owners since they needed cheap labor from Asian countries. Koreans in particular were brought in due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the rising number of Japanese laborers; good Chinese workers were limited while unreliable Japanese sought to monopolize the labor in the fields. Simply, the “law abiding and easy to govern” Korean laborers were needed to offset Japanese workers.⁵ Then, the immigration process was “systematically organized” by planters with the help of American missionaries such as Horace Allen, who got the approval of the Korean emperor and helped the planters to violate the contract labor law,⁶ as well as Rev. George Heber Jones who convinced many young men from his congregation to board the first ship to Hawaii to “set up a church there and evangelize.”⁷

² Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1989), 57.

³ Warren Kim, *Koreans in America* (Seoul: Po Chin Chai Printing Co., 1971), 10.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵ Takaki, 25.

⁶ See Wayne Patterson, *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896-1910* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 109-10. Legally, contract labor was prohibited so that planters were not allowed to pay for laborers' trip fares and deduct that from their monthly wages. To remedy this obstacle, Allen organized the establishment of the Deshler Bank in Korea so that Korean laborers could borrow their travel expense. However, the major capital of the bank came from the planters.

⁷ Ibid., 49.

There were a few push factors that impelled Koreans to emigrate. In general, life for the lower class was extremely difficult during that time because the corrupt Yi dynasty failed to deal with a nationwide famine and cholera epidemics. Protestant missionaries focused their mission on these economically oppressed people, so that the advanced western life and America were often looked upon with envy by these poor Korean Christians. Therefore, when missionaries encouraged emigration to Hawaii, young Christians were more receptive of the idea. Moreover, after winning the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Japan gradually gained control over Korea and finally annexed Korea in 1910.⁸ Thereafter, Korea was a tough place to live in both economically and politically.

Experiences of Hostility

The Korean laborers arrived in Hawaii with a hope to make a fortune and return home, but the life at the plantation was far from what was advertised to them. People lived in big barracks with no privacy; they were called by numbers rather than their names; and they had to endure hard work for the wages of \$16-18 per month.⁹ They worked six days per week, from 6 a.m. for ten hours under the blazing sun. During the work, no private conversation was allowed or standing up to stretch while hoeing weeds. When disobeyed, they were slapped and beaten by the *luna*, foremen, who “carried a whip and rode a horse.”¹⁰ Their life in the plantation was weary and isolated from the outside world, and they were treated “not as human beings but as a means of

⁸ Hurh, 37.

⁹ Bong-youn Choy, *Koreans in America* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 94.

¹⁰ Takaki, 135-36.

production”¹¹ and “no better than cows or horses.”¹² Their life was miserable and lonely, “much like life in a prison.”¹³

Hostility was experienced not only in plantations, but in the larger American society. After 1900, the concept of a “yellow peril” spread throughout the United States so that Asians were regarded as “evil and dirty” and “inferior people” who threatened the jobs of white working-class people.¹⁴ The San Francisco School Board declined the rights of American-born children of Korean and Japanese ancestry to attend the same schools as white children. The Webb-Heney Land Law of 1913 prohibited non-citizens from owning land.¹⁵ Eventually, the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 banned all Asians from entering the U.S., causing many families to remain separated across the Pacific Ocean.¹⁶ Further, they were refused service in restaurants, barber shops, and public recreation facilities. White landlords often refused to rent houses to Asians.¹⁷ In sum, discrimination was a pervasive reality.

Religious and Political Activities

Development and Growth of the Church

One of the most distinctive qualities of Korean immigrant community was the rapid growth of the Christian church. A few factors contributed to this development. Firstly, 400 Korean immigrants had converted to Christianity before coming to Hawaii and among them were “30 preachers who followed the immigrants everywhere.”¹⁸ Six

¹¹ Choy, 95.

¹² Takaki, 136.

¹³ Ibid., 140.

¹⁴ Choy, 107.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 108.

¹⁸ Warren Kim, 28.

months after they first landed in Hawaii, in July, 1903, the first Korean church was founded in Mokuleia, Oahu, and at several other plantations without any outside support or encouragement.¹⁹ The leaders were Korean laborers who had “some missionary training in Korea” and the service was held in “the boardinghouse kitchens.”²⁰ Secondly, the plantation workers who were both physically and emotionally drained in a foreign land desperately longed for an ethnic community:

Their life was confined to plantation work camps. They had to work ten hours a day.... When Sunday came, they were exhausted both physically and mentally. Therefore, the Korean immigrants needed someone who cared for them and gave them some hope for bettering their lives in the future.²¹

They came to church and found consolation and encouragement.

Thirdly, churches in every plantation site grew faster with the support of the Methodist Mission and the planters. The Hawaii Methodist Mission, under the leadership of the superintendent John W. Wadman, soon brought Korean-initiated churches under its authority, and further founded the Korean Methodist Church in Honolulu and built more churches in various plantations.²² The sugar planters made financial contributions to the church because they were pressured by the Methodist Mission and also because they believed that religious admonition would bring “peace, order, and morality” among Korean workers. During the first few years, the general spirit of Koreans were “boisterous, happy-go-lucky, high feeling of fellows drinking, gambling, careless generosity.”²³ Sexual assault was also a problem due to a severe numerical imbalance

¹⁹ Choy, 100.

²⁰ Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawai'i, 1903-1973* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 56. From here on, this work will be referred to as *Ilse*.

²¹ Choy, 257.

²² Patterson, *Ilse*, 57.

²³ *Ibid.*, 41.

between men and women.²⁴ Moreover, the Korean workers were hopping to different plantations for higher wages and moving into cities for better job opportunities. As the result of church growth, they did claim that the Koreans became “most desirable and efficient laborers”²⁵ while “these little chapels ... help[ed] greatly to keep the Koreans in one place.”²⁶

These three factors promoted the church growth, and many Koreans became Christians. By 1918, forty percent of total Korean population was converted to Christianity, and thirty-nine churches of various denominations were established in Hawaii.²⁷ Mrs. Kim noted that “[w]herever Korean immigrants lived there was always a Christian church.”²⁸ Church became a center for Korean immigrants not only to worship God, but also to meet one another, and to be comforted by both God and fellow Koreans. It functioned like an extended family in which all members felt connected to one another.

Independence Movement

Fervent nationalism also kept the early Korean immigrants alive. When Japan annexed Korea in 1910, Koreans became people without a country. Living abroad, they believed that “their first duty was to work for the cause of the restoration of national independence from the Japanese domination.”²⁹ Numerous intellectual patriots fled

²⁴ See Ibid., 42. Patterson attributes sexual assaults to numerical imbalances between men and women and the ignorance of Koreans. However, I maintain that a deeper reason can be traced to the patriarchal culture of Korea. The Confucianism of the Yi Dynasty (A.D. 1600 to 1910) emphasized a strict hierarchical order between men and women so that sexual assaults on women were generally tolerated while assaults on men by women were neither acceptable nor thinkable. The Confucian culture of Korea will be further explored in Chapter 4.

²⁵ Takaki, 164.

²⁶ Patterson, *Ilse*, 63.

²⁷ Choy, 100-01.

²⁸ Quoted in Choy, 97.

²⁹ Choy, 110.

Korea for that reason, so that the Korean immigrants were able to engage in political movements under their leadership. After long days of work, they gathered to learn and discuss about the independence of Korea, and they willingly gave their hard-earned money as “patriotic money” to assist the independence movement.³⁰ In doing so, they found meaning in their back-breaking labor in a foreign land.

The independence movement found its expression through various community organizations. *Sinminhoe* (New People’s Society) was founded on Aug. 7, 1903, the same year immigrants landed in Hawaii, and one of the founders was a Methodist preacher Hyon Sun.³¹ The goal of *Sinminhoe* was “to rebuild Korea with regenerated people at home and abroad” and “to promote... to reform of the home government.”³² However, because the leaders were mostly Methodist, it caused conflicts between Methodists and non-Methodists. Such factionalism created *Ch’inmokhoe* (Friendly Society) in 1905 by Episcopalians, and by 1910, there were over twenty different organizations with similar political intentions.³³

One of the preeminent groups was the Korean National Association, which was organized in 1909 by Ahn Chang-ho, absorbed many other organizations, especially after inviting Park Yong Man and Rhee Syngman as leaders.³⁴ Having many members and regional offices, KNA became a representative political group. Collecting annual dues and donations from members, KNA published newspapers, textbooks for all Korean

³⁰ Ibid., 111.

³¹ Patterson, *Ilse*, 49. In the text, I follow the traditional Korean way of inscribing Korean names so that the family name comes first followed by the given name. It is different in the bibliography.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 52-53.

³⁴ Eun Sik Yang, “Koreans in America, 1903-1945,” in *Koreans in Los Angeles: Prospects and Promises*, ed. Eui-Young Yu, Earl H. Phillips, and Eun Sik Yang (Los Angeles: Koryo Research Institute Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, 1982) 10; Choy, 115.

language schools in America, and led protest meetings and demonstrations.³⁵ As they strongly opposed to the Japanese legation officials over Koreans in America, the U.S. government gave “tacit approval for the organization to represent Koreans in America.”³⁶ When the Korean Provisional Government-in-exile was established in Shanghai in 1919, Rhee was elected as President and Ahn the premier, and Rhee later became the first president of South Korea. The major financial support for the provisional government came from Koreans in America through the KNA.

However, a strong factionalism within KNA led to a major split in the larger Korean community. The ideological difference between Park Yong Man and Rhee Syngman was vast; the former focused on military training while the latter valued “educational and diplomatic means” as an approach to the independence of Korea.³⁷ The conflict between them intensified for nearly two decades involving the management of a newly built school, the misuse of public funds, and eventually the creation of two new factions within the KNA: *Tongji-hoe* (Comrade Society) by Rhee and *Choson Toknip-dan* (the Korean Independence League) by Park.³⁸ Koreans immigrant community was divided into pro-Rhee and pro-Park groups, and the two parties constantly engaged in disputes, accusations, physical violence, and even lawsuits. While nationalistic spirit gave energy to Korean immigrants, extreme factionalism drained both groups.

³⁵ I comment more fully on the schools below.

³⁶ Yang, 12.

³⁷ Choy, 151.

³⁸ Ibid., 161-66.

Education in Early Korean Immigrant Church

Education for Patriotism

It is important to note that the independence movement was inseparably connected to the church; the church became a center for nationalism, and vice versa, nationalistic spirit built up the church. For this reason, education at church was shaped by and thrived under the spirit of nationalism.

Intellectual, patriotic, Christian leaders became preachers and educators of the early Korean churches, and the goal of their education was to imbue nationalism in Koreans in order to work for the independence of Korea. Most of the first generations wished to go back to Korea so that they were determined to dedicate themselves to liberate Korea. Their goal was not becoming “new world citizens,” and they defined themselves as “not sojourners, but political wanderers, and... not laborers but righteous army soldiers.”³⁹ Hence, they devoted their time and money to educate fellow Koreans about nationalism and to raise leaders for the independence movement. Yang Choo-en, one of the early Korean immigrant community leaders, claimed that “every Korean overseas thought that Japan would destroy Korean history and culture, so that we Koreans in America thought we should preserve our culture and urged Koreans to support the Korean school financially.”⁴⁰ Preserving Korean ethnicity and nationalism was their urgent task, and they believed that education was one of the most effective ways.

To reiterate, the political and educational activities in the church were closely related. The political goal was pursued through education and education was carried out

³⁹ Takaki, 282.

⁴⁰ Choy, 298.

through endless political activities that took place at the church. Choy maintains that, “church became the headquarters for the national independence movement. Policies and activities were debated, and national celebrations and protest meetings were held at the church buildings.”⁴¹ Education took place in diverse forms. In addition to traditional methods of sermon, lecture, Bible study, they also had endless political debates supported by churches. Some of the topics were “Jesus Christ and the Future of Korea,” “The Relationship of Korea and Christianity,” and “The Duty of Koreans Abroad.”⁴² Whenever they gathered, they retold the stories of Japanese cruelty in order to keep their nationalistic sentiments alive: Japanese burning a Christian church that was filled with a worshipping congregation and tying Christians by their thumbs to the ceiling until death.⁴³

Korean School

A great part of education at church was also transferred to the Korean school that was established almost by every church. Using the church building, the night schools were opened for both adults and children. After the long days of hard work at sugarcane fields, the adults went to night school to learn both Korean and English. As a result, in 1920, Koreans had the lowest illiteracy rate among Asians.⁴⁴ Children also went to Korean schools in the afternoon. Parents wanted to raise their children as “Koreans” so that the children were taught Korean language, history, culture, and geography at night school. In conjunction with the churches, the Korean schools also introduced Korean

⁴¹ Ibid., 258.

⁴² Takaki, 279.

⁴³ Ibid., 283.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 279.

classical music, folk songs, dances, and arts to children. Newspapers and magazines were published in both Korean and English.⁴⁵

The immigrants willingly supported the education of their children. For this effort, the Korean Compound School, a residential school for boys, was established by the Korean Methodist Church in Honolulu in 1906. A girls' compound school was also founded in 1914, and the two schools later merged into one, the Korean Christian Institute.⁴⁶ The school was headed by Rhee Syngman and funded by the Korean National Association, the most active political group in the U.S.⁴⁷

Korean Immigrant Family and Social Disorganization

The literature on the early Korean immigrant family is limited. Yet, there are glimpses of the family life from oral traditions, biographies, documents, and photos. The family of the early Korean immigrants consisted of several distinctive forms: 500 families that initially came together,⁴⁸ 1,000 families that began a new family through picture bride system,⁴⁹ families that were left behind in Korea and united with their father years later in Hawaii, and single-mother families that were small in number but had strong representation.⁵⁰ Regardless of their form, all families faced hardships that were common to all Asian immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century.

⁴⁵ Choy, 259.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 258.

⁴⁷ See Roberta Chang and Wayne Patterson, *The Koreans in Hawai'i: A Pictorial History, 1903-2003* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 144, 186. The enrollment at KCI declined during 1935 "since public schools were now more accessible," and although it is not clear when the school closed down, the school properties were sold in 1955.

⁴⁸ See Ibid., 16.

⁴⁹ See Patterson, *Ilse*, 80. "The term 'picture bride' or 'picture marriage' refers to the exchange of photographs between the prospective bride and groom through an intermediary. After both sides agree and the groom pays the appropriate fees, the bride travels to Hawai'i and is married at the immigration station to the man she has only seen in a photograph."

⁵⁰ Chang and Patterson, 16, 24-25.

Social Disorganization

The life of the early Korean immigrant family was heavily plagued with many disasters as their hard work and effort were often recompensed with bitter fruits. Wayne Patterson extensively discusses the ill-fated realities of Korean immigrants. Compared to other ethnic groups, statistics show a high rate of “social disorganization” among Koreans. A sociological term “social disorganization” is measured by interracial marriage (outmarriage), divorce, dependency, mental illness, suicide, juvenile delinquency, and crime, from which Korean immigrants in Hawaii suffered greatly.⁵¹ Although these factors do not explicitly focus on family, they do point to dynamics and dimensions of family life.

Interracial marriage rate was high among Koreans. During the early years, many men outmarried due to the imbalanced sex ratio (during 1912-1917, 100 out of 400 married men were outmarried).⁵² The rate decreased somewhat with incoming of picture brides, but increased again for the second generation although the sex ratio was equalized somewhat.⁵³

The high divorce rate was blamed on unhappy picture brides who initiated the 75% rate of divorce, which was not a common practice in traditional Korean culture. Its peak was during 1925-1927, right after the end of the picture-bride system. Statistics from 1927 shows the divorce rate at 19.4 per 1,000. This was almost three times that of the

⁵¹ Patterson, *Ilse*, 122.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 123.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 124.

Chinese and the Japanese.⁵⁴

Koreans also had a high rate of dependency upon social and government aid. In 1934, the rate was second highest at 133 per 1,000, for men aged twenty to fifty-four in Honolulu County. It was twice that of the Chinese and three times that of the Japanese.⁵⁵ By the 1940s many Korean men aged to retire, but being either bachelors or widowers without anyone upon whom they could depend, they felt natural to receive government assistance.⁵⁶

Mental illness rates for Koreans were at 235 per 100,000. It was the highest of any ethnic group in Hawaii. The suicide rate at 75 per 100,000 was three times higher than both that of the Japanese and Chinese, which was 27 and 32 respectively.⁵⁷ One study described Koreans as being “unhappy,” “easily discouraged,” “lonely,” and “feeling miserable.”⁵⁸

The juvenile delinquency rate was also high among Korean teens. Although the Puerto Ricans, Hawaiians, part-Hawaiians, and Filipinos preceded them, the case number was twice that of the Chinese and four times that of the Japanese, disregarding the larger population of the latter two groups.⁵⁹

Adult crime was not an exception. While the Korean population was less than two percent of the population in Hawaii, statistics prove that five percent of all prison inmates were Korean in 1929.⁶⁰ During the earlier years, they were convicted for gambling,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 125.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 125-26.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 126.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 127.

violation of narcotics and liquor laws, and public drunkenness; in the later years their charges concentrated on burglary, fraud, and forgery.

In their efforts to explain such phenomena of extreme social disorganization among Koreans, sociologists provide several possible causes. The core reason is the small size of the Korean population. This smallness caused them to be less segregated by themselves but to be geographically dispersed so that they lived in an ethnically mixed neighborhood, mostly in urban areas. Such geographical location instigated fast acculturation. Their settler-mentality, a tendency to settle down instead of being a sojourner, also accelerated acculturation. Interracial marriage and divorce were signs of acculturation into the main culture since Asian culture held hesitant views towards those practices. Studies found that dependency, mental illness, juvenile delinquency, and adult crime rates were high among ethnic groups that were small in number and geographically dispersed, such as Puerto Ricans, while the opposite was true for Japanese who lived in a strong ethnic neighborhood.⁶¹ For Korean immigrants who were scattered in urban areas, finding recourse from other Koreans was harder compared to larger ethnic groups. Rapid acculturation brought positive outcomes such as academic success and employment advancement, but the down side of being “too rapid and unselective” led to “an appreciable personal and social disintegration.”⁶²

Intergenerational conflicts are another significant dimension for understanding family life. The elements of conflicts between the first and the second Korean immigrants were diverse: residence, clothing, food, eating instruments, observance of celebrations

⁶¹ Ibid., 123-27.

⁶² Ibid., 127.

and commemorative days, and language. However, the most critical discords revolved around traditional family values that included hierarchical relationship, ancestor worship, collectivism versus individualism, honoring the family name, filial piety, and gender equality.⁶³ The core reason is again attributed to fast acculturation, particularly of the second generation. Although the first generation was more acculturated compared to that of other ethnic groups so that they encouraged their children's acculturation, cultural differences between the two generations was vast. For the second generation, their parents' ways and values were old and unfitting for the new world. They rejected traditional East Asian culture by a score of -.15 while second generation Chinese and Japanese accepted it by a positive score.⁶⁴

Reinterpretation of Social Disorganization

Sociological studies paint a very gloomy and distressing picture of Korean immigrant family life. Although these particulars are undeniable, in actuality they deserve a more subjective observation from the inside. As the scholars pointed out, the influence of population size was highly related to the social disorganization of an ethnic group. Hence, the comparison with larger Asian groups, particularly Japanese and Chinese, is inappropriate, though enticing. By 1920s, Chinese made up 9.2%, Japanese 42.7%, Filipinos 8.2%, and Koreans only 1.9% of the entire Hawaiian population.⁶⁵ Compared to Koreans, the former three groups were numerically dominant so that the larger size of their ethnic community created quite different dynamics in their familial and social life patterns. Moreover, certain phenomena were inevitable for small ethnic groups. For

⁶³ Ibid., 128-45.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁶⁵ Takaki, 132.

example, Korean immigrant insiders testify that “nearly all of the descendants of the first family members intermarried” so that “there are hardly any descendants of the first families who are not related through marriage.”⁶⁶ Because the Korean ethnic group was so small that intermarriage was permissible only up to a certain level. Once two families became related through a marriage, Korean culture did not allow their close relatives from the two families to intermarry. Hence, high rates of intermarriage were technically unattainable within a small ethnic group. For the Korean immigrant community, marriage outside the ethnic community may have not been a choice, but an indispensable option. In this sense, outmarriage may not be an adequate measure of social disorganization.

For this reason, I argue that the knowledge of Korean immigrant family life can be enriched through a closer examination of the life stories told through their own voices. Instead of focusing so much on their social configuration in comparison with other ethnic groups, it would do justice to illuminate their strengths and resilience despite their adversarial social circumstances. Therefore, while bearing in mind the high rate of social disorganization among Koreans, I now turn to the other side of the picture, to the sources of energy that sustained Korean immigrants. There are glimpses of resources for family strength and resilience that shine even brighter because the insignificant size of their ethnic community painted the background very darkly.

Korean Immigrant Women and Their Families

As a way to explore family life which has limited representation in literature, I concentrate on the immigrant women who became the backbones of the family. Alice Chai distinguishes these women into two groups: early Korean immigrant women and the

⁶⁶ Chang, 16.

picture brides.⁶⁷ The former group came during the first three years (1903-1905) of the first Korean immigration wave, usually with their family, while the latter arrived starting in 1910, as single ladies to be wedded to men whom they had met only through pictures.⁶⁸ Studies on these women disclose immigrant family life: its hardships, dynamics, gender relationship, changes, priorities, strengths, and values.

Early Korean Immigrant Women

Most of the early immigrant women were wives of immigrant men. It is briefly mentioned in *The Koreans in Hawai'i: a Pictorial History 1903-2003*, that "[t]he men who came with wives were more likely to succeed financially..." and that the women provided stability to both homes and communities.⁶⁹ Since there were many bachelors in camps, "[m]ost of the wives ran laundry services and kitchens called *koksang* for the single men."⁷⁰ Some of the early women were single mothers who "came to escape bad marriages" while others were "Bible women" who were rejected from their families due to their Christian beliefs.⁷¹ They often became strong leaders of the immigrant community, serving as evangelist, teacher, public health educator, social worker, and political activists.

⁶⁷ Alice Y. Chai, "Korean Women in Hawaii, 1903-1945," in *Asian and Pacific American Experiences: Women's Perspectives*, ed. Nobuya Tsuchida (Asian/Pacific American Learning Resource Center and General College, University of Minnesota, 1982).

⁶⁸ Although both groups made great contributions to family life, the picture brides deserve separate attention since the system was a unique phenomenon. I allow more space for the picture brides and specify their distinctive input. However, general descriptions of family apply to families of women from both groups.

⁶⁹ Chang and Patterson, 16-17.

⁷⁰ Alice Y. Chai, "Korean Women in Hawaii," 78.

⁷¹ Ibid., 76-77.

Coming of the Picture Brides

The influx of the picture brides was necessary, and it altered the portrait of Korean immigrant life. Single Korean men presented trouble in plantation life. About 5,000 of 7,226 Koreans who entered Hawaii were bachelors, and their plantation life was “lonely and monotonous.”⁷² Their work at camp was hard, but their only recreation was drinking, gambling, and sometimes fighting. Building healthy Korean families and communities was urgent and necessary not only for Korean bachelors, but also for the planters who believed that it would halt the workers’ exodus to the city and improve the quality of work on the plantations.⁷³ The 1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement between the United States and Japan allowed for the entry of family members. Since Korea was annexed by Japan in 1910, Koreans then accessed the same benefit. After five years of cessation of immigration, picture brides started to come. The arrival of picture brides brought radical changes not only to these bachelor men, but also to the familial and communal life of Korean immigrants.

During the 14 year period, beginning in 1910 until the Exclusion Act of 1924, the number of picture brides to Hawaii totaled 951.⁷⁴ Most of the picture brides were very young, ranging from 15-25 years old, and from poor southern provinces such as Kyongsang.⁷⁵ The majority was uneducated, but some had good educational backgrounds, and many had prior contacts with Christianity like the earlier group. Their main push factor was devastating poverty, so that they were “attracted to the supposed

⁷² Warren Kim, 27.

⁷³ Alice Y. Chai, “Korean Women in Hawaii,” 77.

⁷⁴ See Warren Kim, 22-23. He also notes that 115 picture brides went to the United States.

⁷⁵ Alice Y. Chai, “Korean Women in Hawaii,” 77; Patterson, *Ilse*, 81.

riches of Hawai‘i.”⁷⁶ However, they had also come with a hope to escape Confucian patriarchy, Japanese colonialism, and for educational opportunity. A 16 year-old Young Oak’s family was so poor that she had decided to support her family by marrying a supposedly well-off man in Hawaii.⁷⁷ Her previous contacts with missionaries also embedded an admiration for American life, so that when an intermediary was searching for prospective brides, Young Oak aggressively approached her. Lee Hee Kyung came to Hawaii with a “dream of attending college,” but her husband’s meager wage did not allow for it.⁷⁸

These young women were very brave and courageous, since they came to the foreign land by choice. Confucian practice bound women to stay home before marriage and demanded marriage through arrangement. They hardly had a say in their choice of mate. But the picture brides chose their husbands by picture and were brave enough to leave their home country to a far away land to marry someone they had never met. Young Oak “never wanted to marry a peasant boy from the other side of the hill, nor tread the same path as other women she had seen” and planned the marriage without her parents knowing it.⁷⁹ Anna Choi bombarded her mother with a determination to be a picture bride, “I decided to go to Hawaii and asked my mother whether I could be a picture bride.... My mother thought I was crazy and tried to persuade me to abandon such a

⁷⁶ Patterson, *Ilse*, 82.

⁷⁷ Won Kil Yoon, *The Passage of a Picture Bride* (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University Press, 1989), 22.

⁷⁸ Margaret K. Pai, *The Dreams of Two Yi-min* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989), 2-3.

⁷⁹ Yoon, 37.

notion, but in vain.”⁸⁰ By making such a bold and challenging decision which involved drastic changes in one’s life, they displayed strong will and determination.

The picture brides faced their first disappointment the moment they landed in the new country. When they met for the first time their prospective husbands in person at ports after a long journey on the sea, most brides were shocked and disappointed because the men looked very different from the pictures due to relentless work under the strong sun. Moreover, the husbands were generally twenty years older than their wives.⁸¹ They felt betrayed and deceived as Anna Choi recalled, “When I first saw my fiancé, I could not believe my eyes. His hair was gray and... was a lot older than I had imagined.”⁸² Some refused to get married, and they found refuge in church or at the Susanna Wesley Community Center.⁸³ A few were so terrified that they returned to their homeland even though it was a disgrace and shame to her family, not to mention a burden of the costly return trip fare.

Adjustment to the Immigrant Life

Women’s lives began on an unhappy note due to falsity of picture bride system, and they continued to suffer. Some were physically abused by paranoid husbands who were afraid that their wives would run away, some actually ran away while others divorced their husbands. Yet, some suffered from husbands’ gambling and drinking. One picture brides grieved over her tormenting past:

⁸⁰ Choy, 320.

⁸¹ Takaki, 56.

⁸² Choy, 321.

⁸³ Alice Y. Chai, “Feminist Analysis of Life Histories of Hawaii’s Early Asian Immigrant Women,” *Asian Journal of Women’s Studies* 2 (1996): 42: See also Chang, 56. The Susannah Wesley Home was “affiliated with the Korean Methodist Episcopal Church. It was established in 1903 and designed to care for young girls in need of day care and as a temporary home for new immigrant arrivals.”

My husband was a drunkard and gambler. He lost all his earnings by gambling. He used to beat me up so much that I often ran into the hills with my children crying. My husband did not even allow me to go anywhere, and he used to tear up all the incoming mail addressed to me. I don't know how I have survived in that hell-like situation with him for fourteen long years.⁸⁴

Like all immigrants, the picture brides were also lonely in a faraway land so that Young Oak “cried alone during the day time” while her husband was out at work.⁸⁵ Most devastating of all, the living conditions in the plantation were nothing close to the “dreamland” that allured them.

Most picture brides, however, managed to adjust to their aged, unattractive husbands and also to their harsh immigrant life. They did not leave their husbands and families despite the disappointments and sufferings that followed. Duty and responsibility based on Confucian teachings kept them in the marriage. One picture bride confessed, “If my fiancé had been a little bit younger, I would have listened to my uncle readily, but I did not have it in my heart to disappoint or hurt such a middle-aged man like him.”⁸⁶ Another endured her painful marriage, remembering her mother’s admonition to serve her one and only husband and to look up to him “like a heaven.”⁸⁷ Their Christian faith was another core factor that sustained them in marriage and further enabled them to encourage other picture brides.⁸⁸ In spite of their disadvantageous life circumstances, these women displayed powerful characters and brought changes in their family life as well as in their communities. As many old bachelors became family men, they became more reliable so that the Korean community in large “began to change from a stagnant society to a more

⁸⁴ Alice Y. Chai, “Feminist Analysis,” 44.

⁸⁵ Yoon, 66.

⁸⁶ Choy, 321.

⁸⁷ Alice Y. Chai, “Feminist Analysis,” 44.

⁸⁸ Yoon, 124.

progressive and prosperous one.”⁸⁹

Contributions of the Picture Brides

The picture brides’ major contribution was the economic betterment of their family. They began working a few days after their arrival, and many worked at sugar or pineapple plantations alongside their husbands. Their daily labor was ten hours long, but they received less than men; a woman’s wage was \$0.55 while a man’s was \$0.78 in 1915.⁹⁰ These women suffered from a double burden since they had to work at field and also cook and take care of family members. Young children presented another burden as they had to work while piggybacking them or leave them home under the care of older siblings. Others stayed home and provided laundry and meal service for bachelor men, and in addition, “sewing, growing and selling vegetables, fishing, and raising domestic animals.”⁹¹ Their ardent work brought extra income to their new families.

The picture brides brought financial stability to their families also by supporting a new family business. Notwithstanding the plantation owners’ wish for stability in family men, ironically, the influx of picture brides “tended to accelerate the already rapid departure of Koreans for the city.”⁹² Many families moved to cities, particularly to Honolulu because the picture brides encouraged their husbands to change their occupation. Mrs. Roh Jung-Soon “did not like the idea of her husband working on a farm and wanted him to learn a skill... Life was truly miserable... She again pressured her husband to learn a skill in a field where a job was available.”⁹³ With a little capital, often

⁸⁹ Choy, 124.

⁹⁰ Takaki, 135.

⁹¹ Alice Y. Chai, “Feminist Analysis,” 44.

⁹² Patterson, *Ilse*, 81.

⁹³ Choy, 112.

attained through *kye*,⁹⁴ they established various family-operated businesses such as grocery, tailoring, laundry, rooming service, barber shop, carpentry, and repair shop.⁹⁵

Kyes existed from the first decade in Korea, but it was the picture brides who “developed more sophisticated ways to use the money” by starting a new business.⁹⁶ Although some Koreans were jobless from time to time, many of the women opened rooming houses and purchased real estate so that Koreans’ economic success was well-recognized by mid-1920s and 1930s.⁹⁷

In their later life, the picture brides displayed even fuller economic responsibilities. Many women became the sole breadwinner of the house in their 30s and 40s as their aged husbands died or became “physically unable to provide for their families.”⁹⁸ The picture brides had to support the family which was usually very large. Anna Choi’s husband, thirty years her senior, died six years after their marriage and left her with five children. She recalled her painful days:

I had all my children and myself to support. I worked without rest, straight through the week.... I did any kind of work I could lay my hands on. ... We moved from our apartment to an abandoned house on the hill in order to save rent.... I had a little further to walk to work, but I had to do anything to save money. After a while, my body could not keep up with this sort of hard work and routine. One day when I was drawing water from the well, I was thrown into the well and lost all consciousness.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ See Patterson, *Ilse*, 76. *Kye* is “a traditional system of rotating credit.”

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75-77.

⁹⁶ Chang and Patterson, 156.

⁹⁷ Patterson, *Ilse*, 77.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹⁹ Choy, 322-23.

Yet, these strong-willed women persisted and sustained the family as well as educated their children. The children who had aged fathers, therefore, often perceived that “fathers were never the heads of household or breadwinners.”¹⁰⁰

Challenging the Gender Role

By making a significant input to the economic condition of the family, the picture brides challenged traditional gender dynamics. While Korean tradition confined women’s place to the home and their role as homemaking, these immigrant women contributed to the family finances by earning money so that they expanded their culture-defined gender role. Patterson also notes gradual changes in the traditional status-based usage of Korean language.

[P]icture brides in Hawaii tended to adopt more egalitarian usage in addressing people,... This egalitarianism also resulted in the disappearance of speech-level differences between husband and wife, making them linguistically and socially more equal, as opposed to the gender-based traditional Korean superiority of males over females.¹⁰¹

Compared to families in Korea, the picture brides were more equal in their relationship with their husbands, playing an active role in various dimensions of family life.

However, the change in the boundaries of Korean traditional gender roles did not merely affect family life, but furthered the communal and social dimensions. Lili M. Kim explores this contribution in her article, “Redefining the Boundaries of Traditional Gender Roles: Korean Picture Brides, Pioneer Korean Immigrant Women, and Their Benevolent Nationalism in Hawai‘i.” Kim claims that these early Korean immigrant women changed the traditional gender dynamics “by expanding their influence in the

¹⁰⁰ Chang and Patterson, 155.

¹⁰¹ Patterson, *Ilse*, 95.

public sphere, actively serving in the Korean churches as teachers, Bible study leaders, and committee members.”¹⁰² The two outstanding pillars of their social achievement were political activity and social services through community organizations.

As mentioned earlier, the independence movement for Korea had been one of the most central concerns for Korean immigrants, both men and women. However, women’s contribution is noteworthy apart from that of men. Although women worked alongside men, their work displayed “different, gendered expressions of nationalism.”¹⁰³ While the larger Korean community was suffering severely from factionalism and conflicts, Kim maintains, Korean women formed strong bonds among themselves and promoted humanity, harmony, and patriotism.¹⁰⁴

Women’s Organizations

Korean immigrant women’s nationalism and humanity had been revealed through various social organizations. In 1908, Hankuk Buin Hoe (The Korean Women’s Association) was founded and its main goal was to teach the Korean language to their children.¹⁰⁵ Upon receiving the news of the nation-wide March First Movement of 1919¹⁰⁶ against the Japanese occupation, Korean women reenacted a peace march in downtown Honolulu, “[d]ressed in traditional Korean dresses, ... singing Korean patriotic

¹⁰² Lili M. Kim, “Redefining the Boundaries of Traditional Gender Roles: Korean Picture Brides, Pioneer Korean Immigrant Women, and Their Benevolent Nationalism in Hawai‘i,” in *Asian/Pacific Islander American Women: A Historical Anthology*, ed. Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 109

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰⁶ See Patterson, *Ilse*, The March First Movement was a “mass demonstrations against Japanese control and for Korean independence” which took place in major cities in Korea, causing many deaths, injuries as well as imprisonment.

songs.”¹⁰⁷ These women met again and established Taehanpuin Kujehoe (the Korean Women’s Relief Society) in the same year, under the leadership of Maria Hwang.¹⁰⁸

Soon, local chapters were formed on each of the four major islands. The purposes of the organization were:

to give the needy help in time of their distress, and to promote the mutual human interest, understanding and friendship among the Koreans and Americans, and to encourage the fair and just treatment of all races, familiarizing its members with the Western ideals and equality, and other social activity, promoting the spirit of good fellowship among its members.¹⁰⁹

With 300 charter members, the organization effectively carried out various activities to fulfill their goals.

Their endeavors focused on fund raising; they saved rice from their daily meals and made rice cakes for sale; they also put on theater shows of Korean folktale and folk dance. Or they simply went around and sold the Declaration of Independence Manifesto from the March First Movement or collected donations, “carrying a baby on her back and holding the hand of another boy.”¹¹⁰ Although one mother was weary and exhausted from walking all day long, she used the opportunity to teach her children about love for the home country. She articulated to her son, “[s]ince you are a son of Korea, you suffer as much as your parents. But we have to endure this suffering until the day of independence.”¹¹¹ Although the poor Korean plantation workers could donate only one

¹⁰⁷ Lili Kim, 112.

¹⁰⁸ See Ibid. Maria Hwang was a brave and radical early Korean immigrant woman who came to Hawaii with her children, abandoning her husband who had a concubine. She declared to her husband before leaving Korea, “I can no longer live under these circumstances with you. I am taking our children to America and will shame you in the future. These children shall become educated and I shall become a wonderful person. You can remain as you are.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹¹⁰ Yoon, 103-04.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 104.

or two quarters, the total amount of funds the Korean Women's Relief Society raised was \$200,000.¹¹²

Yongnam Puinhoe (Yongnam Women's Society) was another powerful organization that demonstrated women's unity for social service and patriotism. Immigrant women from Kyongsang, or Yongnam (southern district of Korea), provinces found this new group "to encourage savings, to promote Korean manufactured goods, to engage in business enterprises, to have fellowship, and to secure mutual assistance and support."¹¹³

The group was very adept at helping those in need and in supporting the independence of Korea. The society helped its members in times of need, and further financially assisted foreign students and freedom fighters who were from their hometown region. In their effort to take a part in the March First Movement, they sent a representative to Korea. Upon the members' request, "Hee Kyung, we think you should go and represent all of us. We will pay for your trip," Lee Hee Kyung became the emissary to the demonstration.¹¹⁴ She went to Korea in the summer of 1918, secretly carrying the collected funds, participated in the Movement, and later was arrested and imprisoned by the Japanese for nearly a year. Yet, the women were not as trapped by factionalism as was the larger community. They embraced people from both factions: "We [*Yongnam Puinhoe*] never fought. We had everyone from *Tongihoe* [*Tongji-hoe*] and *Kuk Min Hur* [*Kukminhoe*]."¹¹⁵

¹¹² Alice Y. Chai, "Korean Women in Hawaii," 83.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Pai, 8.

¹¹⁵ Lili Kim, 115.

There were numerous other organizations, mostly affiliated with the church or work place, and they were networks of friends for the purpose of helping one another in times of need. Margaret Pai's recollection of her mother Lee Hee Kyung demonstrates positively the formidable strength of these women and their organizations:

Home, church, and a society called the Younngnam Pui Hoe made up my mother's whole world. At her church she helped form the Methodist Ladies Aid Society, a powerful organization that provided a network of services reaching every Korean family in the community. Although the immigrants were all poor, so dedicated were the Society members that no family went without food or a roof over their heads (immigrant men often lost their jobs); a mother with a newborn baby did not have to rise from her bed until she was strong. All these services were rendered despite the fact that every woman was burdened with heavy responsibilities of her own.¹¹⁶

By attending to the immediate needs of families and helping one another to survive, these networks "replaced the extended family that they had left in their homelands."¹¹⁷

Family Life

One of the notable features of the early immigrant family was the educational achievement of the children. Koreans valued education based on Confucian teaching, and their tenacity for education flourished in the land of opportunity. Although the financial circumstances of family life were extremely unstable, the parents struggled to keep their children in school as they saw the future opportunities that education could bring. Mary Paik Lee's family had to drift from place to place, especially during the Depression, but the children always attended school.¹¹⁸ Margaret Pai remembered her parents' daily admonitions, "'Study hard! Study hard!'"... An education was the most important reason

¹¹⁶ Pai, 7.

¹¹⁷ Alice Y. Chai, "Feminist Analysis," 46.

¹¹⁸ Mary Paik Lee, *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 27.

for living, it seemed.”¹¹⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Chung Bong Won also believed that “nothing should get in the way of their children’s education.”¹²⁰ As a result, Korean students excelled academically; ranking second in intelligence, starting early and staying longer in school, and having high representation in all grades including college.¹²¹ Many also went to the mainland to attend high school and college. By becoming teachers, nurses, engineers, medical doctors, and community service persons, the 1.5 and the second generation attained an upward social mobility.¹²²

The life in early Korean immigrant family was filled with religious experiences. The responsibility of children’s education was greatly shared with the church, as mentioned earlier. Yet, the parents of early Korean immigrant family taught their children Christian faith by modeling it in their everyday life. Margaret Pai’s childhood Sundays were filled with excitement as her family went to church in clean dresses, met congregation members who were “like a large, intimate clan of relatives,” and spent the whole day with them at church.¹²³ She grew up watching her picture bride mother actively engaged in the service of others through the church. Mary Lee was greatly shaped by her father “thanking God for all [their] blessings” even though they had nothing but a tiny biscuit and a cup of water for all three meals, and her mother who firmly believed and stated that “God was surely leading us to the right place” during their frequent move in search of a job.¹²⁴ She further stated, “No matter where we lived, Father always

¹¹⁹ Pai, 46.

¹²⁰ Yoon, 73.

¹²¹ Patterson, *Ilse*, 121.

¹²² Chang and Patterson, 114-17.

¹²³ Pai, 55-56.

¹²⁴ Mary Paik Lee, 23, 27.

invited people to come to our house for a brief time of worship” while “Mother served whatever food we had for lunch.”¹²⁵ Dora Yum Kim’s Christian picture bride mother, who owned a family restaurant in San Francisco, had a kind heart toward young seamen Korean boys: “my mother used to feed those boys and love them just like her own.”¹²⁶ Witnessing parents’ commitment to a Christian way of life, the children were nurtured to esteem the Christian faith.

The children who grew up in such financially and socially constrained immigrant families learned to help and cooperate among family members. As the mother cooked for single men, the Paik children were assigned to other household chores such as drawing water, doing laundry, cleaning, and gathering wood. Their responsibility nurtured voluntarily assistance to family in later years. Mary, at her own will, took a cleaning job at her principal’s house and later a school janitor while attending grade school, and her older brother Meung decided to give up high school in order to support the family that had deteriorated with her father’s severe illness from intoxication. His sacrifice rooted in “his love and consideration for family” sustained the family members through the hard times.¹²⁷ Dora started working at the family-operated restaurant at age ten with all her siblings; “When we weren’t in school, studying or taking class of some sort, we worked at the restaurant.”¹²⁸ It was common for older siblings to baby-sit younger ones while mothers were working.¹²⁹ They not only assisted in bringing extra income to the family,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹²⁶ Soo-Young Chin, *Doing What Had to Be Done: The Life Narrative of Dora Yum Kim* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 35.

¹²⁷ Mary Paik Lee, 43.

¹²⁸ Chin, 35.

¹²⁹ Alice Y. Chai, “Feminist Analysis,” 44.

but also enriched the family life with value of understanding, commitment, and mutual support.

The children's sense of duty and responsibility was further expanded to their relationship with others and the larger society. Mary Paik began to help other Koreans with language interpretation since her youth.¹³⁰ Dora Kim spent most of her life in the service of Korean immigrants at the California State Department of Employment and the Korean Community Center in San Francisco. However, she humbly diminishes her significant contribution and achievement as "doing what had to be done."¹³¹ Moreover, in weaving her life narrative, Dora's sense of self is defined "in relation to others" so that "there is no life story without the people with whom she has shared life space."¹³² Their connectedness with other persons was valued and practiced in the community as well as in the family.

Conclusion

The history of early Korean immigration was painted with sorrow, discrimination, and hard work. Their home country became a subject of Japanese colonialism, their life at the sugarcane field was far from the vision of the dreamland that they had expected, and the small Korean population contributed to severe social disorganization. Yet, that is not the whole picture; in the midst of their painful and harsh realities of immigrant life, the early Korean immigrant community and families displayed strength and resilience to overcome their circumstances and to survive. Several resilient factors are notable.

¹³⁰ Mary Paik Lee, 54.

¹³¹ Chin, 3.

¹³² Ibid., 12.

First, the early Korean immigrant community and family were composed of adventurous persons who sought to change their onerous life circumstances. Both men and women came to Hawaii in search of a new life, and they were determined to face hardships. They endured hard work, looked for better opportunities, and employed various adaptive strategies. The Korean immigrant women, especially the picture brides who rose above the initial despair of their marriage, altered their family lives as well as their communal lives. They challenged and expanded their traditional gender roles by actively participating in economic, political, and social betterment of the immigrant family and community.

The strong Christian faith in immigrants provided them with a positive attitude and outlook. A large number converted Christians came to Hawaii, and they found comfort and encouragement through worship and fellowship with other congregation members. They believed in and thanked God for guidance in their immigrant lives. Although many circumstances were at odds, they tried to discern God's purpose for their lives in the foreign land and they found their unique role in the independence movement. Such faith further enabled their struggle to change the future. Instead of accepting the given circumstance of the home country as simply fate, the immigrants were determined to change it through intensive education and political activities. They also endeavored to improve their economic conditions. Women taking active roles, many immigrant families started new businesses and altered their financial status. Their Christian faith enabled them to persevere and also provided them with a vision for the future.

Their value of education was another essential element that enriched the life of Korean immigrants. They believed in the power of education, and education at church

empowered immigrants. As illiterate Koreans learned to read both Korean and English, they discovered their capabilities and potential. Patriotic education also gave them a sense of purpose for enduring hard work at plantations. They tried to provide the best education for their children; teaching the Korean heritage in partnership with the church and placing priority in sending them to school for social advancement in the U.S. Education empowered them to work for changes and eventually brought them changes.

The early Korean immigrants were capable of mobilizing community networks for various purposes. The church became a center of the immigrant community and provided for the various needs of immigrants. Political organizations, in partnership with the church, functioned as a driving force of immigrant life and made significant contributions to the independence movement. Women's organizations attended to various day-to-day needs of immigrants and their families in addition to their unique ways of expressing nationalism. *Kye* was another social network which provided finances to start new businesses for many families. These organizations often functioned as extended families, which they had left in their homeland, supporting and assisting one another.

Through these organizations, immigrants learned and practiced to live with a larger vision than mere survival in this new society. Their hearts were opened to others who were in worse conditions and to their home country that was suffering from devastating colonialism. Hence, they willingly gave their time, energy, and hard-earned money for such causes. Despite their poor life conditions, they were able to see beyond the benefits and interests of individuals and their own families.

Their care for one another was also experienced within family as the members learned to live in cooperation. In a very individualistic society, Korean immigrants

retained their traditional value of mutual support, and it sustained the family and the community through tough times.

Having addressed these legacies from early Korean immigrant community and families, I will now turn to the third, or contemporary, wave of the Korean immigrants. Who are they and what are their social, economic, and political backgrounds? What are their issues and concerns in family? Understanding their context and circumstances will prepare Christian educators to minister more effectively to the families of today's Korean immigrants.

Chapter 2

CONTEMPORARY KOREAN IMMIGRANTS AND FAMILIES

I have surveyed the history of the early Korean immigrants and the strengths of the immigrants and their families in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I explore the third wave of Korean immigration. The first part contains social, economic, cultural, religious adaptation, and family issues identified by the literature. In the second part, I turn to personal voices of immigrants, and from these I draw out the issues and struggles of Korean immigrants and families as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The second part verifies, enriches, and also supplements the former theories. This work as a whole provides the basis for a broad and deep understanding of the contemporary Korean immigrants and thus offers directions for religious education for Korean immigrant families.

Contemporary Korean Immigrants and Their Adaptation Patterns

The immigrants from the third wave compile a quite different picture from the first wave Korean immigrants who were composed largely of low class workers who came to stay temporarily to make a fortune, and political leaders who strove to liberate Korea from Japan. The pull and push factors and intentions for migration, their economic status, and education level are different as well as their adaptation patterns from their forebears.

Push and Pull Factors

After 40 years of the discriminatory policies toward immigration of Asians since The Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924, the Immigration Act of 1965 opened the door for a

new wave of immigration, “abolishing discrimination based on national origin.”¹ The new law admitted immigrants based on three qualifications; “1) Their possession of occupational skills needed in the U.S. labor market (occupational immigration); 2) Their close relationships to those already here (family reunification); 3) Their vulnerability to political and religious persecution.”² As the result of this law, Asian immigration increased with the change in the proportion of Asian immigrants from 9% of the total U.S. immigrants in 1960 to 44% in 1980.³ The Asian American population grew from 250,000 in 1940 to 900,000 in 1960, and to 7.3 million by 1990.⁴ The annual number of Korean immigrants also changed drastically: 1,507 in 1960, 9,314 in 1970, and over 30,000 each year during the 1980s.⁵

There were several factors that motivated Koreans to leave their home country. A Korean American sociologist Won Moo Hurh states the main reasons of immigration:

The push factors were the cumulative consequences of the national division of Korea, the Korean War, and the military dictatorship and its policy of “guided capitalism,” encouraging rapid industrialization at the expense of the Korean population, which suffered mass displacement.⁶

Political instability again became one of the major reasons for emigration. Whereas the first wave was politically oppressed by the Japanese invasion, the contemporary group was threatened by Communist North Korea and the dictatorship of South Korea’s military government. The tragic Korean War caused the relocation of many Koreans, especially the North Koreans as they escaped the communist regime and settled in the

¹ Pyong Gap Min, “An Overview of Asian Americans,” in *Asian Americans: Contemporary Trends and Issues*, ed. Pyong Gap Min (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 11.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 18-19.

⁵ Min, “Overview of Asian Americans,” 13.

⁶ Hurh, 40.

South of the divided nation. Hence, emigration was rather easily acceptable to those who emigrated within the country once already. It had also embedded the fear of another war in all people; they wanted to live in a place of political stability. Post-war political circumstance also generated a cultural reason for immigration to the United States. Ilsoo Kim highlights the influence of American culture on Koreans:

After the World War II, the existence of the U.S. forces in South Korea have transmitted American mass culture into South Korea. South Koreans have been deeply impressed with American affluence and mass consumption... American popular songs and movies have fascinated Korean urban youth, ... learning English has become a major tool ... for upward social mobility. This cultural impact has been cumulative: Korean urbanites yearn more and more for American life styles and mass consumption.⁷

Influenced by American culture and their way of life, Koreans were motivated to immigrate to the United States where economic opportunities were promised. They defined their motivation of immigration as “to seek a better life, to pursue education, and to be reunited with family members.”⁸ They came to stay and prosper in the new land.

Selective Characteristics of Immigrants

The contemporary Korean immigrants can be described as people with selective characteristics, “psychologically and economically fit for survival in contemporary American society.”⁹ Many were well-educated urban and middle class people who experienced a rapid urbanization and industrialization; more than 50 percent of the Koreans in New York City area had white-collar urban occupations before emigration and 67 percent had graduated from college in Korea.¹⁰ A majority came to the United

⁷ Ilsoo Kim, *New Urban Immigrants: The Korean Community in New York* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 33.

⁸ Hurh, 45.

⁹ Ilsoo Kim, 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 38-39. See also Hurh, 44. The 1986 Chicago survey shows that 87% of males had white-collar occupations, and 52% of male and 40% of the female respondents finished college in Korea.

States when they were economically productive, between 21-50 years old.¹¹ In addition, as the growth in medical service in the United States welcomed foreign medical professionals, the selective emigration of Korean medical workers and their families took place.¹² Along with skills, a high percentage of them came with financial resources that enabled them to set up their own business.¹³ Also, many from the elite classes entered the U.S. as visitors, investors, or students, and later changed their status to permanent resident to settle for “economic opportunities, social stability, and political freedom.”¹⁴ Unlike the first immigrants, the contemporary Korean immigrants came in their basic social unit, that is, the nuclear family.¹⁵ In short, the new immigrants had many assets which aided their adaptation to the new life in the United States: urbanization experience, education, skills, financial power, and family support.

The immigrants settled in major metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston, Atlanta, and Boston.¹⁶ They were drawn to large cities because of economic opportunities and low rents. Although Koreans are known for scattered settlement in comparison to other ethnic minorities, they do form ethnic business districts in major cities.

Economic and Social Adaptation

Despite their good education and a strong ambition for the American dream, their economic adjustment in the new land has been very strenuous. A large number of people experienced downward job mobility since the former professionals became small

¹¹ Hurh, 45.

¹² See Ilsoo Kim, 148. During 1965-1973, over 6,000 Korean medical professionals came to the United States.

¹³ Ilsoo Kim, 47.

¹⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁵ Ibid., 44.

¹⁶ Hurh, 42-43.

business owners and laborers upon immigration.¹⁷ Approximately 45% of Korean immigrant workers in Los Angeles are self-employed in small businesses, and another 30% find employment in the Korean ethnic market.¹⁸ They generally operate or work at green groceries, liquor stores, dry cleaning businesses, or fashion item stores where they sell wigs, handbags, or jewelry.¹⁹

Korean immigrants' concentration on small business can be accounted for several reasons. First, American "centralized business and occupational structure" that accompanies "discrimination against new minorities" prevented immigrants from entering into the mainstream middle-class occupations.²⁰ They neither had the necessary skills nor proficient English to cross over the high walls of occupational centralization. However, socioeconomic changes in the United States created opportunities for new immigrants; urbanism trends of the 1950s to 1970s allowed them to settle in city areas. As the large number of the white middle-class population moved from cities to the suburbs or suburban cities, many Korean immigrants purchased retail stores from retiring white minorities.²¹ Thirdly, America's mass consumption culture called for inexpensive imported fashion items that can be "quickly accepted and discarded." The wig-industry is a good example as it established the wig manufacturers in South Korea, using a cheap labor force, and invited many Korean immigrants into the wig business as importers, wholesalers, and retailers.²²

¹⁷ Hurh, 43.

¹⁸ Pyong Gap Min, "Korean Americans," 209.

¹⁹ Ibid., 209-11.

²⁰ Illsoo Kim, 144.

²¹ Ibid., 110-11.

²² Ibid., 121-30.

The economic adjustment of Korean immigrants through small business has been generally successful, and it was greatly due to the family structure of the immigrants. In those days, retail businesses were in decline because of the rise of shopping centers and franchised chain stores. However, Korean immigrants were able to compete with them and survive by employing family labor. Some families that had little capital chose “labor-intensive” businesses such as fruit and vegetable stores and utilized all family members in operating the business.²³ Combination of Koreans’ “family-centered success ethic that caused each family member to be willing to devote himself to the family business” and a strong motivation for economic mobility had ushered them to endure long hours of intensive labor. As a result, majority families achieved economic stability. In a survey of 1986, 80% of self-employed Korean families in Los Angeles and Orange Counties reported their annual income to be above \$25,000 which was a little higher than the median household income for all U.S. households in 1986.²⁴

On the other hand, small business also involves social costs. By concentrating on small business, Koreans often play a middleman minority role. Min describes the middle man as “an intermediate role between the ruling class and the masses by distributing products made by the former to the latter.”²⁵ As they distribute goods produced by U.S. corporations to low-income minorities, they often become targets of hostility and violence. Many boycotts and strikes have been staged against Korean retailers in major cities and the L.A. Riot in 1992 has been the most damaging one. During the riot, 2,300 Korean-owned stores were burned, and property damages were more than \$350 million. Many Koreans lost everything that they had established after long years of hard work and

²³ Ibid., 120.

²⁴ Min, “Korean Americans,” 211.

²⁵ Ibid., 213.

they felt that they were “used as scapegoats ... to downplay black-white racial conflicts.”²⁶ However, through these incidents, Korean immigrants learned the importance of attaining political power to protect themselves while the younger generation became more conscious of their ethnic identity.²⁷

In terms of cultural and social adjustment, Korean immigrants tend to stay close to their ethnic people, culture, and values. Based on a survey, Hurh concludes:

Korean Americans’ attachment to Korean cultural values and social attitudes is pervasively strong, particularly with respect to filial piety (honor and obedience to parents), negative attitudes on intermarriage, conservative gender ideology (traditional sex roles), family interest over individual interest, preference for Korean churches, and perpetuation of Korean cultural heritage among posterity.²⁸

Koreans’ ethnic attachment is stronger than other Asian ethnic groups. Keeping very close ties with relatives, friends, and mostly Korean neighbors, they try to solve medical or other serious problems within Korean ethnic community. Min illustrates three reasons for such phenomenon. Firstly, Koreans come from an ethnically homogeneous country and speak one language. Secondly, the Korean church is a strong organization that holds Korean immigrants together, providing both spiritual and social needs. Korean immigrants’ church affiliation is up to 75% and their religious activities physically segregate them from the dominant society. Thirdly, by concentrating in small businesses they maintain social interactions with other Koreans and also establish associations to handle conflicts with outside groups.²⁹ These factors draw and keep Koreans together within their own ethnic community.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 228.

²⁸ Hurh, 73.

²⁹ Min, “Korean Americans,” 214-15.

Koreans' high level of ethnic attachment is closely related to their low level of assimilation. Being segregated in their culture and business, Koreans are either not willing or have little chance of learning English. A majority of first generation immigrants are not fluent in English, barely read American newspapers, and prefer to eat Korean food most of the time.³⁰ Their strong ethnic attachment deters them from assimilating into the dominant society.

Religious Activities

One of the most distinctive traits of Korean immigrant communities is the predominant function of Korean churches. Statistics show that over 70% of Korean immigrants are affiliated to Christian churches that number up to 3,500.³¹ What makes Koreans so highly church affiliated? Both religious and social motives play a crucial role in this phenomenon. Like the Korean immigrants from the first wave, more than half of the present Korean immigrants are pre-emigration Christians, and as scholars maintain, immigrants become more religious than in their homeland.³² They try to find meaning for their immigrant life through religion. Also, Korean immigrants, including non-Christians, are attracted to church to meet their social needs. Since their social life in the dominant culture is limited due to language barrier and racial minority status, they turn to their ethnic community. These two functions, religious and social motives, are "not

³⁰ Hurh, 70-1.

³¹ Jung Ha Kim, "Cartography of Korean American Protestant Faith Communities in the United States," in *Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities*, ed. Pyong Gap Min and Jung Ha Kim (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 205.

³² See Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, "Ethnic Roles of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States"; and R. Stephen Warner, "The Korean Immigrant Church as Case and Model," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 73; 27.

separable but are inherently intertwined” and they make up the “ethnic” roles of Korean immigrant churches.³³

The social function of Korean ethnic churches can be further explored. Illsoo Kim maintains that the Korean church has become a basic grass-roots community organization that plays multiple social roles: a surrogate of ethnic neighborhoods, a broker between immigrant and dominant community, an extended family, and a nurturer of Korean culture and nationalism.³⁴ Due to the absence of effective community organizations, churches take up various functions to meet the immediate and distant needs of immigrants. Since Koreans have not formed any territorial enclaves, churches serve as the surrogates of ethnic neighborhoods where Koreans meet and mingle with one another at their own comfort level. Yet, simple socialization is not all they offer; churches become a broker and provide various programs that help members to better adjust to the larger society. These programs include counseling on immigration and naturalization, employment, housing, health care, social security, and education.³⁵ Another crucial role is that of an extended family. Korean immigrants prefer a “family atmosphere” within a relatively small congregation where direct and personal interaction with members is possible.³⁶ They try to form a substitute for the extended family through auxiliary organizations within the church such as a Sunday school, a youth association, a women’s association, a men’s association, and “district service” groups. For the same reason, a minister’s crucial task often includes mundane duties such as “matchmaking, ... visiting hospitalized members, assisting moving families, ..., making airport pick-ups of

³³ Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, 74, 92.

³⁴ Illsoo Kim, 191.

³⁵ Illsoo Kim, 201.

³⁶ Ibid., 199.

newly arrived family members, interpreting for “no-English” members, administering job referral and housing services, and performing other similar personal services.”³⁷

Moreover, by celebrating Korean traditional holidays and operating Korean Language Schools, churches sustain and enhance Korean culture and tradition.

Korean immigrant churches bear several distinctive characteristics. Compared to other ethnic congregation members such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Caucasians, Korean immigrants’ tenure with a particular congregation is very short. Even taking into account the short years of immigration, their membership duration is relatively short as they often move from one church to another.³⁸ Yet, their involvement in church activities is very intense, attending worship service every Sunday and making financial contribution more than other ethnic church members.³⁹ However, they are indifferent to outside congregation activities. They rarely spend their time or money on organizations outside their particular congregation.⁴⁰ The strong hierarchical and patriarchal culture is strongly represented within the church structure. Being an elder is a highly valued position which stands above deacon, and it is often perceived as a social status let alone a religious one. Ninety-two % of Korean elders are male while women members make up more than half of the congregation.⁴¹ In terms of a theological stance, both self-identification and a simple test questions confirm that Koreans are theologically

³⁷ Ibid., 200.

³⁸ Kwang Chung Kim and Shin Kim, 81.

³⁹ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 83.

⁴¹ Ibid., 84. The issue of women’s status in the Korean church has been pointed out by several scholars. See Young Lee Hertig, “Asian North American Women in the Workplace and the Church,” in *People on the Way: Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community*, ed. David Ng (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996); Ai Ra Kim, *Women Struggling for a New Life: The Role of Religion in Cultural Passage from Korea to America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); Jung Ha Kim, “Cartography of Korean American Protestant Faith Communities.”

conservative.⁴² Due to their immigrant experience of “uncertainty and insecurity,” they seem to find assurance and confidence in “absolute belief and strict moral standards of evangelical orientation.”⁴³

One of the most pressing issues facing Korean immigrant church is the decline of the second generation Korean American members. The phenomenon is expressed as “silent exodus” since the exiting number of the second generation is extremely high, but often unrecognized within Korean churches.⁴⁴ When the children were young, they attended church with parents and experience church as a strong advocate and nurturer of ethnic identity and ethnic pride. However, as they grew up and became adults, they sensed the shortcomings of the Korean church so that the church participation rate dropped from 65 to 70 percent to only 5% by the time they graduated from college.⁴⁵ The main reasons for exodus are “pressure of conformity that suppresses individuality” and sectarian “strictness” for both cultural conservatism and religious commitment imposed by the first generation.⁴⁶ The key to successful generational transition and/or intergenerational church is, Karen Chai claims, “distinctiveness” which encourages one’s personal growth and embraces unique ethnicity and spirituality of the second generation.⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid., 85-86.

⁴³ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁴ Karen J. Chai, “Beyond ‘Strictness’ to Distinctiveness: Generational Transition in Korean Protestant Churches,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Young Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) 158.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 157.

⁴⁶ Peter T. Cha, “Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches: Second-Generation Korean American Experiences,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Young Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001) 150; Karen Chai, 163.

⁴⁷ Karen Chai, 163-64.

Family Issues

Although family has been the key to economic success of Korean immigrants, it has also been vulnerable to enormous tension and conflicts. The tradition-oriented family system which respects “family interest, duty, obligation, and mutual dependence” comes into conflict with the Western values of “individual interest, rights, intimacy, and independence.”⁴⁸ Confucianism was once the state religion of Korea for over 500 years during the Yi Dynasty, and its principles were deeply embedded into the behaviors and attitudes of all Koreans. Since Confucianism is a familial religion which emphasizes the family as a fundamental unit of society, its effect on familial relation is crucial.⁴⁹ Its five categories of interpersonal relations are basic principles of harmonious social relations, and three of them involve the family: parents and children, king and people, husband and wife, older (brother) and younger (brother), and friends.⁵⁰ These hierarchical relations wobble as they clash with different principles of the Western culture.

In exploring Korean immigrant families, Min maintains that, along with cultural differences, structural conditions also have great effects on family relations.⁵¹ Their engagement in small business demanded modification in women’s role, and it then brought further changes in marital relations. Small business, in conjunction with language barrier and cultural difference, also influenced parent-child relationships.

Korean immigrant women’s social and economic roles changed drastically in the new land. Based on Confucianism’s emphasis on a clear role differentiation between husband and wife, patriarchy was well established in Korea. The husband, the head and

⁴⁸ Hurh, 83-84.

⁴⁹ Details of Confucianism regarding family will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

⁵⁰ Pyong Gap Min, *Changes and Conflicts: Korean Immigrant Families in New York* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998), 25-26.

⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

primary breadwinner of the family, worked while the wife stayed home and took care of the family. However, Korean married women were “forced into undertaking the unfamiliar economic role” in the immigrant context due to financial constraints.⁵² A 1988 survey revealed that 71 percent of Korean married women in the New York metropolitan area were in the labor force, 54 percent worked full-time, and they spent an average of 51 hours per week at their jobs.⁵³ Thirty-eight percent of Korean women were engaged in small businesses in cooperation with husbands, and they became a significant source of family income.

Korean women’s increasing in economic role leads to double burdens on women and also marital conflicts mainly because their structural changes do not correspond with traditional gender role orientations which they tend to maintain. Although many wives are burdened with double roles from their full time job and household tasks, husbands are usually unwilling to share the household tasks due to traditionally assigned gender-roles within family. As a result, Korean women who work spend twelve more hours per week (75.5 hours) on both tasks than their husbands.⁵⁴ Their burden includes not only physical labor, but also stress, role strain, and other forms of depression due to their divided attention between outside and household work. Marital conflicts are a common issue in Korean immigrant family as wives’ increased economic power also threatens husbands who have maintained a culturally dominant position in the family. While wives have gained economic power and independence, husbands are reluctant to change traditional

⁵² Ibid., 38.

⁵³ Ibid., 38-39. See also Min, “Korean Americans,” 222. Fifty-seven percent of U.S. married women work.

⁵⁴ Min, *Changes and Conflicts*, 43.

conjugal relations. Also, frustration with their low social status after immigration and long hours of work cause marital discord.⁵⁵

The Korean children experience ambivalence and confusion as they struggle to develop a new identity in the process of acculturation. Scholars suggest that the healthiest model of acculturation is developing an integrated, or an acculturated, identity in which one maintains both a cultural identity and positive relations with the larger society.⁵⁶ Hence, opportunities to explore one's ethnic identity must be provided through various experiences in the ethnic community. Healthy and affirmative experiences with the dominant society are as important. Carola Suarez-Orozco and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco keenly point out the incredible effect of the "social mirror" as immigrant children's identity is being shaped.⁵⁷ They receive predominantly negative reflections from the larger society, such as "bad, stupid, useless, garbage," and their reactions to these reflections can determine the styles of adaptation.⁵⁸ In order for one to craft a transcultural identity, ethnic community, family, individual, and the dominant society all

⁵⁵ Min, "Korean American Families," 197-99.

⁵⁶ See Berry and Sam, "Acculturation and Adaptation." They present four models of acculturation: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The formation of the four models depends on the two issues: "Is my cultural identity of value to be retained? Are positive relations with the larger society to be sought?" Literature on acculturation and identity-development is vast and I find some theories to be more helpful for my study. See Jean Phinney, "Ethnic Identity in Adolescents and Adults: Review of Research," *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 3 (1990): 499-514. Phinney distinguishes the difference between ethnic identity and acculturation: ethnic identity is an aspect of acculturation, focusing on how individuals relate to their own groups as a subgroup of the larger society while acculturation refers to changes in cultural attitudes, values, and behaviors due to contact between two cultures, its focus being how minority groups relate to dominant society. See Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*, 4th ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2003). Sue and Sue present a Racial/Cultural Identity Development Model. This conceptual framework presents five stages of development through which people struggle to understand themselves in terms of their "own culture, the dominant culture, and the oppressive relationship between the two cultures" (96). The five stages are: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and integrative awareness stage. Going through these static stages, arriving at the last stage is most preferable as the individual finds an inner sense of security, and appreciates positive aspects of both one's own and the dominant culture. See Pyong Gap Min, ed., *The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity among Asian Americans* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002).

⁵⁷ Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 96-101.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 96-97; 101-18.

have contributing factors. Concerning family, the authors encourage children to “reflect positive mirroring, deflect negative mirroring, maintain authority and cohesiveness, and inoculate and foster hope” in order for their children to develop a competent bicultural identity.⁵⁹

While the development of a healthy self-identity as a minority is an urgent task facing the second generation Korean immigrants, generational conflicts seem to be a more apparent problem in Korean families. Conflicts between the first and the second generation Korean Americans are very complex because there are linguistic, cultural, and generational gaps. The first generation tends to have strong ethnic attachment so that they do not try hard to learn English, while the second generation quickly learns English and forgets their native language. Therefore, the two generations do not have a common language to communicate with each other. Often their conversation touches only on surface matters.

The two generations’ greatest conflict comes from cultural differences. If Korean culture can be described with terms like family-oriented, interdependent, authoritarian, dutiful, and obedience, American culture is individualistic, independent, democratic, values freedom of choice, and emphasizes personal happiness. While the first generation tries to hold onto Korean cultural heritage in their effort to preserve their “Koreanness,” the second generation finds Korean culture irrational, unreasonable, and outdated. Parents request absolute obedience from their children, the latter view parents as too demanding, uncompromising, and overprotective. The difference in their values is often due to misunderstandings and miscommunication, if at all, stemming from the language barrier. Moreover, as Min contends, parents’ long hours of strenuous work at their small

⁵⁹ Ibid., 121.

business play against their filial relationships, reducing quality time spent with children at home.⁶⁰ To make the problem worse, they tend to cover up the tension because Asian culture respects peace and harmony.

An emphasis on academic success is another main cause of discord in the Korean immigrant family. Under the influence of the Confucianism, Koreans have long valued education as the main path to social mobility. Better education for children has been one strong motivation for immigration to the United States so that Korean parents do as much as they can for such a cause; deciding the residence based on the quality of schools, sending children to private institutions after school, and bearing a financial burden for costly college tuition.⁶¹ As a result, many Korean students excel academically. However, while parents pressure them to do well, children often experience discrimination and alienation in school, and some fail to satisfy parents' wishes. A significant number of them engage in delinquent acts such as cutting class, fighting, running away from home, taking drugs, and joining gangs.⁶²

The issue of the Korean elders also demands more attention as the elderly population is increasing since the 1970s. Most of the elderly in Korea live with their adult children under the Confucian principle of filial piety, a sense of obligations to parents. In the United States, however, a 1993 survey shows that over 50 percent of the elderly live independently.⁶³ They are capable of doing so mainly due to economic stability, and their main income source is welfare and food stamps, in addition to occasional gifts and allowances from children. They form strong social networks and

⁶⁰ Min, "Korean Americans," 226.

⁶¹ Min, *Changes and Conflicts*, 66-9.

⁶² Min, "Korean Americans," 225.

⁶³ Min, *Changes and Conflicts*, 86.

live in Korean-concentrated areas in their effort to cope with culture shock. The majority were content with their standards of living. However, they often feel neglected and grieve because filial piety is no longer practiced in the new land.⁶⁴ They also experience status decline within the family as they are often assigned to care for grandchildren and do household chores instead of being subjects of honor and respect. Some also express their unhappiness due to their incapability of being self-sufficient in terms of finance and transportation.⁶⁵

Qualitative Research on Contemporary Immigrants

In addition to the above analysis based on statistical research, I employ a qualitative research component for a deeper understanding of the lives and realities of Korean immigrants. Using personal stories of Korean Americans, I draw out themes and theories concerning their immigrant lives.

Method

The methodology of this qualitative research is “grounded theory” as the term is defined by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin: “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process.”⁶⁶ Instead of beginning with “a preconceived theory,” I begin with Korean immigrants’ life stories and “allow the theory to emerge from the data.”⁶⁷ Although I do construct theories at the end, my goal is not the theories. The stories are significant in their own ways for they serve three functions. First, the personal stories *verify* what the literature claims about Korean immigrants. Second, the life and experiences of Korean immigrants expressed through

⁶⁴ Ibid., 99.

⁶⁵ Hurh, 88-103.

⁶⁶ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998) 12.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

their own words with feelings *enrich* the existing theories. Lastly, they *supplement* issues and experiences that have been ignored or unnoticed by conventional quantitative studies. In conjunction with the statistical analysis, the theories that emerged from data will bring forth deeper understandings of Korean immigrants' multilayered lives, and provide clear and practical insights for pastors and Christian educators who minister to this complex, yet unique group of people.

To draw out grounded theories on Korean immigrants, I use the ethogenic method developed by Mary Elizabeth Moore and follow the basic five phases – preparation, story-collecting, analysis, story-telling, and theory building.⁶⁸

I collect data from two sources. The first source is life stories presented in *East to America: Korean American Life Stories*,⁶⁹ and the second is the interviews that I have conducted with family members of a Korean immigrant church. The former is valuable since it comprises very diverse biographical stories of immigrants with broad and general backgrounds. The latter is more focused on the family unit and its church life. I chose five stories from *East to America* and conducted interviews with three families from the congregation.

To analyze these two sets of data, I read their stories (the former transcribed and rewritten by the editors, the latter tape-recorded and transcribed by me) closely and looked for common words and phrases, symbols, actions/activities, patterns of interactions, and then, based on these elements, I drew out the commonalities and themes from their experiences. Then, I build theories based on these themes.

⁶⁸ Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Dynamics of Religious Culture: Theological Wisdom and Ethical Guidance from Diverse Urban Communities," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 2 (1998): 242.

⁶⁹ Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, eds., *East to America: Korean American Life Stories* (New York: New Press, 1996).

Stories from *East to America*

East to America: Korean American Life Stories is a collection of life stories of Korean Americans. Right after the *sa-i-gu* (4.29, referring to the L.A. Riots), the Korean American community was outraged by the news media for “diverting attention from the larger issue of the centuries-old problem of racial hierarchy in the United States” and stereotyping Korean Americans in negative images.⁷⁰ The purpose of this book is simply to, “bring forth a variety of viewpoints to demonstrate how Korean American lives are linked but at the same time are multiple, layered, and non-equivalent.”⁷¹ In order to prove the point, Elaine H. Kim and Eui-young Yu present a collection of stories (oral histories) told by various Korean Americans. After conducting three to eighteen hours of interview with each person, they transcribed the tapes and drafted the stories so that the interviewees would not sound as “inarticulate aliens.” The stories are indeed “an intervention into the misunderstanding of Korean Americans.”⁷²

Since each story is very rich with many events and emotion, I have chosen five stories for close study. The story-tellers represent a wide range: men and women, young and old, highly educated and successful to a gang member. In spite of my efforts to make a random selection, I cannot deny the fact that these particular stories spoke to me strongly; their experiences and pains often resonating with my own or arousing heart-felt emotion and sympathy within me. I introduce the five story-tellers from *East to America*, and I try my best not to distort their stories by rephrasing them.

⁷⁰ Elaine Kim and Eui-Young Yu, introduction to *East to America: Korean American Life Stories*, xvii.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., xviii.

1. Kathy Kyung Sook Kim (born in 1960, interviewed in 1993, 1994)

Kathy immigrated to America when she was fourteen and was “very bitter” about the life in the U.S. Her outgoing personality changed and she became silent, sharing her feelings with no one. When she entered high school, she was determined “to start from zero,” so she got actively involved in various activities as well as her studies. She began working at the Korean Youth Center (KYC) and found working with youth gangsters to be a challenge. She studied sociology at UC Berkeley and worked at KYC and the United Way, and presently works as an executive director at Colors United. She finds high-risk youths to be very powerful as they express themselves in theater in spite of their difficult circumstances. In all her work, she is highly committed to supporting the Korean American community as well as the well-being of all individuals. Married, with a son born with Down’s syndrome, she finds “a lot of pleasant surprises” from living with her son Robin. Her family, marriage, and work keep her going and provide her with “emotional and intellectual needs” that are really important to her.

2. Sean Suh (born in 1976, interviewed in 1995)

Sean was born in Guam and lost his father twenty days after birth. His mom and Sean moved to Los Angeles with nothing, but his mother worked hard and bought a house. However, she did not pay much attention to him so that he “grew up with [his] friends.” He experienced cruel racism and was beaten up very often. He joined an Asian gang because he felt “comfortable with” them, and it helped him build a strong self-esteem. His mother found out that he was a gangster 3-4 years later, but she simply “didn’t know how to handle it.” His *t’aekwondo* (Korean martial art) master who thought highly of him “made [him] realize” the devastating future of gangster life. Presently, he tries to “gradually fade out” of the gang. Because his mother is going through a hard time financially, he tries his best to help her. He wants to make money and marry a Korean girl. He is determined to take care of his family and wants to be “happy” although “violence, prejudice, racism” will not disappear from this world.

3) James Park (pseudonym, born in 1942, interviewed in 1995)

James lived without his father until he entered junior high school, but after his mother’s death, he lived with his father, father’s concubine, and half-brothers. His father abandoned his family physically, emotionally, and financially and his mother died at age 43 due to his “father’s neglect.” In spite of constant arguments between his father and stepmother and the struggles of his other family members (grandmother and brothers), he studied hard and entered Seoul National University (the most prestigious school in Korea). After college and working for a year, he came to the United States “to escape from family problems.” He received a master’s degree and also married a Hispanic woman. His import-export business succeeded and he petitioned for his brothers to immigrate to America. Together, they are now successful business men with an excellent “business philosophy.” His wise wife gave good advice and supported him fully so that he was able to get a doctorate degree in international business at the age of 49. He teaches classes at various schools, continues his business, and is actively involved in social and community activities. He not only supports his father and stepmother who are in Korea, but has also invited his half-brothers to America. He is overall very happy and successful, except for his unresolved resentment toward his father and stepmother.

4) Hyun Yi Kang (born in 1967, interviewed in 1994)

Hyun Yi was born in a poor family in a factory district of Seoul and immigrated to America when she was in fourth grade. Since she was very young, she was a spokesperson for her parents whose English was poor. Her parents were successful in a garment factory for a short time, but they lost everything after a tax audit. They continue to suffer financially with no alternatives, but she appreciates them for doing their best. She is thankful that they are “pragmatic” by not imposing “their values and desires” on her. She feels guilty for being unable to help them financially even after graduating from UC Berkeley. Often she feels the “incredible untranslatability” and “untraversable gulf” between herself and the parents because they do not understand what she studies or why she does (English literature in college, Ph.D. in the history of consciousness). Yet, knowing where she comes from, she considers everything she has as privilege. She has been involved in producing Korean American “cultural articulations” in the forms of art and writing. She believes that rather than having “spokespersons,” people need to tell their own life stories which overlap in many parts with many others’ stories.

5) Dong Hwan Ku (Pseudonym, born in 1958, interviewed in 1993)

Life has been hard for him during the 1960s, especially economically. To a man in poverty, U.S. soldiers at a nearby camp portrayed America as heaven. After finishing college, he married a Korean immigrant woman and came to the States in 1984. Since he could not speak English, he took any kind of job offered to him: janitor, shirt presser, dishwasher, hamburger cook, etc. He was hassled a lot and moved from place to place and finally settled in California as a small sundries store owner. He feels “disabled” due to his English, but finds no time to study. He works “fourteen hours a day, seven days a week.” However, he barely makes a living. What is more frustrating is that he is at “war” in his work and feels “defeated;” he has been cursed, beaten, and even hospitalized. Yet, he has no other choice but to endure and continue to work hard. He is lonely, has no time, no money, and no place to go. Because “the American dream is unattainable” and his immigrant life is so painful, only a drink after work numbs his pain.

Interviews with Korean American Families

I interviewed three Korean-American families from a Korean Presbyterian Church where I served as a children’s pastor for eight years. The church is located in a large urban city in Orange County, California, where the Korean-American population is very high. The church was founded 28 years ago by the present senior pastor and the membership has grown steadily up to 1,500, composed largely of upper-middle class members.

This interview was carried out as a partial requirement for a class offered at Claremont School of Theology so that I used the interview questions provided by the instructors. (See Appendix A.)

1) John Lee (pseudonym, born in 1969, interviewed in 2001)

John immigrated to America with his family (parents, two sons, one daughter) in the year of 1982 when he was in eighth grade. He attended this church from the beginning and his whole family are active members except his older brother who left this church and joined another one about four years ago. His father is an elder and his mother a deaconess, and he serves as a part-time pastor for the young adult group. During high school years, he went through an identity crisis. When he realized that he was not one hundred percent Korean anymore, he was lost. Suffering from depression, he drank a lot and did many “awful things” in order to escape from his inner trouble. At one point, however, he came to his senses and realized that he had to live “in the right way.” After college, he got a job and has been currently promoted to a branch manager of a well-known American bank. While working in the bank, he attended a seminary and finished his M.Div. about two years ago. He is married and has a two-year old daughter and is expecting the second child in early summer. He identifies himself as a 1.5 generation Korean-American.

2) Hyung Kim (pseudonym, born in 1968, interviewed in 2001)

Hyung is a mother of two children, a five year-old daughter and a three-year old son. She came to America in 1994, after marrying her husband who had immigrated earlier. Her husband was a member of this church so she joined him. From the next day after she arrived in America, she went to school. First she studies in adult school, then community college, and then transferred to a Cal State University. She will graduate this May with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, and wishes to begin the teaching credential program in Special Education. She has and still continues to experience much racism at school, classism at church, and a personal identity crisis. People around her have not been very helpful so that she is determined to offer a hand to others who are in the same shoe. Her husband began working at the U.S. Postal Service two years ago after many years of struggle in a computer-related business.

3) Young Lee (pseudonym, born in 1954, interviewed in 2001)

Young immigrated to America in 1986 with her husband and two sons who were six and seven. They initially came to Ohio where her brother lived. But after one month, for better job opportunities, they decided to settle in Downey, California where her other relatives resided. They attended a small church for over seven years, and then finally changed to this church due to better faith education opportunities for children. However, her second son had a hard time adjusting to the new church. While three members are active in church, the second son left for a church where his neighborhood friends attended. In the early years of immigration, she and her husband had to “bump and run” into obstacles that surrounded them. Life was very tough, but they endured. She has given her best effort and time to care for and educate her sons and both are now attending

prestigious colleges. Her husband works as a handyman although he was an engineer in Korea. Due to the language barrier, his customers are limited to Koreans, and he does not receive adequate payment. However, she is very content because her children grew up “properly” and she and her husband find happiness in church life.

Themes and Theories

From these voices of Korean Americans I look for common words and phrases, symbols, actions/activities, patterns of interactions, and then, based on these elements, I drew out the commonalities and themes from their experiences. Then, I build theories based on these themes.

Themes (Story Telling)

1. Immigrants are involved in an intensive decision-making process. In order to immigrate to America, they had to make a critical decision. Once they get to America, they continuously face decisions concerning where to live, how to live, and with whom to associate. Making a decision in an unfamiliar society is tough and often one decision plays a critical role in their entire immigrant life. Most people explain why they have settled in Los Angeles, and the primary reason is the large Korean-American community.

Hyun Yi's parents' determination to run a garment factory brought a financial collapse after a tax audit. Ever since, they have been struggling. Dong Hwan Ku finally settled in Los Angeles and bought a store, but he over worked without a vision for the future. On the other hand, Kathy Kim who was shocked by the American school culture hesitated for long whether to “belong” or not. When she entered high school, however, she *chose* what to do; going to a different school, studying hard, making good friends, getting more involved with church, school, and community activity. Her determination

to get involved eventually led her to study sociology and work for the Korean American community.

John's most dramatic decision in his life was determining to turn away from "his old ways of drinking and fooling around." If he had not come to America, he believed that, he would have never gone to that path. People who have known him since that time are shocked at how much he has changed; from a gangster to a minister. To Young's family, immigration to Ohio and another move to California involved a tough decision.

2. Related to the first theme, yet in tension with it, is that even though people have to make important decisions, they are very limited in their choices. For the first generation, especially if they have no educational background in this country, they feel "scared" and "disabled" as Dong Hwan exclaims. Most first generation immigrants take jobs as janitors, seamstresses, dishwashers, or hamburger cooks. They would take any job offered and once they get stuck in a situation, they often can find no way out. Young's husband's engineering profession became useless as he ended up being a handyman. Dong Hwan wants to "sell the store move back to Korea" and Hyun Yi's parents stayed in the business even though they were losing money because "they couldn't see any other alternatives." Hyun Yi had to work since the fifth grade in spite of her desire, but she "didn't have any choice."

Often the second generation Korean Americans also feels that they have very few alternatives even with a good education at prestigious schools. Hyun Yi mentions that many Korean Americans go back and help their parents at the "liquor store, factory, or restaurant" after finishing college. She is also highly frustrated because she is unable to help her parents financially. In spite of her good education, she lacks "personal or family

connections” which seem to matter more in today’s economy. She lives in guilt, with “the feeling of being powerless to help [her] family.”

3. Further, their life is limited by various barriers. Despite the long years they have lived as immigrants in this country, they still struggle with issues of language, cultural gap, racial discrimination, financial difficulty, and a lack of information. They have tried very hard to learn English, but cannot help speaking “with accent” for the rest of their lives, as Hyung laments. Young is deeply hurt because she is unable to guide her children for their future due to a lack of information. “These things,” she grieves, “cannot be solved by attending Adult School.” Although he attained a speedy promotion at his work, John senses “the glass ceiling” that he cannot go through due to his racial background. Sean, Dong Hwan, and Hyung encounter racial discrimination every day and it has caused so much pain in them. To Sean, Hyun Yi, Dong Hwan, Young, and Hyung, financial difficulty is a major issue for their families.

Barriers not only limit their condition of life, but also their further involvement in the larger society. Some of them are U.S. citizens and active in voting. Many work in the larger American social context. However, they hardly have other social networks or participate in non-ethnic community events. The center of their life is the Korean community; they attend Korean church, read Korean newspapers, watch Korean TV stations, and have social lives with other Koreans. They seek meaning and happiness within the Korean community. The barriers force them, but they also limit themselves by staying within the boundary of Korean community because they are more comfortable among Koreans.

4. Self-identity is an important issue to immigrants and they seek various routes to build their self-identity. Kathy Kim refused to be identified with her classmates in Junior high school, who “looked like fully grown-up” with “their make-up, their clothes,” inappropriate gestures such as “kissing” and “hugging.” She tried to maintain her identity with her friends in Korea by writing them “a lot of letters” while having “superficial” conversations with friends in America. In high school, she found her identity as a Korean American by getting involved in the Korean church and Korean Student Association. As she worked in the Korean Youth Center, her attachment to the Korean immigrant community strengthened and provided her a direction for life.

Hyun Yi Kang’s identity crisis was two-fold: her ethnic identity and her socio-economic identity. Whenever she felt “disenfranchised and out of place” in the U.S., she always considered going back to and living in Korea as an alternative. However, when she went back to Korea during her college years, she unexpectedly experienced “rejection” from Koreans, and also realized that she was not fully Korean by the way she spoke, by the way she dressed and behaved. Such painful experiences led her to reconsider her identity and her “home.” She also continuously mentions her socio-economic status. She is aware of many other Koreans who have “more socio-economic privileges.” She reminds herself of “what she missed becoming” by placing a picture of “a Korean girl factory worker” next to her computer. She also feels “both privilege and a sense of shared identification” with Latino workers from her parents’ garment factory. Overall, she deeply appreciates her privilege for being able to study and do what she is capable of doing now.

Sean Suh discusses self-esteem and its role in a person's life. Experiencing so much racism for being "different," he felt "so small." He wanted to be with people whom he felt "comfortable with," and where no "racial jokes" were slurred. He joined a Filipino gangster who was a tagger.⁷³ He does not regret joining a gang even though he now wants to withdraw from it, because by "being with [his] own people," he has attained his "self-esteem." Sean's mother got a realtor's license even though she did not work as a realtor. He believes that she has done it for herself "to accomplish something" in her life. James Park went back to school and received a doctorate degree in his late forties, and he was happy with what he had accomplished.

The identity crisis is an extremely tough process and often a lonely struggle. When John Lee was going through it, he found a group of people who were in his shoes. They became close friends at church and hung out together, but without receiving any assistance. Hence, in their crisis they found no sense of direction. When all her expectations were shattered in America, Hyung Kim found herself at the "bottom." She simply did not know how to handle her crisis, but hardly anyone shared his/her experiences with her. To her, schooling was a way to search for a new identity in a new land. However, after six long years, she still has not found "anything" that belongs to her or "anyplace" where she feels at home. But she considers this search a challenge.

5. Despite all the difficulties, Korean immigrants display resilience: a strong power to turn over their situations and overcome hardships. Kathy's strong determination to begin from scratch and her active involvement in her work eventually led her to work for high-risk youths. James went to school and earned a Ph.D. degree in

⁷³ Sean explains that "taggers aren't violent. All they care about is fame." Therefore, they spray-paint walls, writing their names.

his late forties. Hyun Yi had a picture of “a Korean girl factory worker” next to her computer to remind herself of what she could have become. Deeply appreciating her privilege to study, she did her best and graduated college despite her family’s severe financial crisis. She even helped her family financially. John worked very hard “to get out of ESL,” and in two years he was excelling above average and gained respect from other students. At work, his effort was paid off by a speedy promotion. Hyung went to school from the day after she arrived in America and continued to finish her bachelor’s degree in education while raising two children. Young became a founding member of the Korean PTA in the Los Angeles school district and encouraged other mothers to participate.

The power of resilience seems to come not from mere “anger and proud persistence” (*oh-gi*), as Hyung claims, but more from love for her family members, desire to preserve self-dignity, and hope in the future. Based on the hope that things will improve in the future and that their effort will bring changes in their self-image, they endeavor without ceasing. Hope becomes “the driving force, the underlying dynamic that pulls humans into the future” as Andrew Lester expounds in his book.⁷⁴

6. Hope is one of the most important themes that run through everyone’s story. While some have a strong hope for the future, others express no hope for their life or for the society. Working at Colors United as an executive director, Kathy helps many youth express themselves through artistic presentations. She witnesses how their involvement in this program not only brings transformation for themselves, but also “generates energy in other people.” She is excited about her work because she sees hope in them. Even

⁷⁴ Andrew Lester, *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 61.

though she does not like Los Angeles for certain reasons, she is hopeful that it can be a place where people can have interaction with other people and learn to accept them “as individuals first.”

Hyun Yi is annoyed by European Americans who do not bother to know other people and their culture beyond very superficial level, yet she sees hope. In order to distort the “one unified official image of Korean Americans,” she has put Korean American arts festival and edited “an anthology of Korean American writings called *Writing Way Here*. Through this kind of “more diverse cultural articulation,” she has also learned the value of “communal experience” which overlaps in many Korean Americans’ life histories.

Going through the experiences of severe racism, Sean is not very hopeful for the future of the society. “Whatever race is in the majority, they’re going to pass judgment on the minorities. Everyone is racist against each other, everyone is against everyone. Gangs are going to be around forever. Violence, prejudice, racism, it’s all going to be around,” he declares. However, he still has hope for his own future, for his family. He is determined to be happy and rich. His childhood was not a happy one because his mother did not pay much attention to him and their cultures were different. But based on his experience, he is convinced that he can make a difference for his children. He is confident that he can make his family happy.

Dong Hwan has experienced racism while working in Texas, New York, and California. He faces threats and violence everyday so that he feels “scared” and trapped. He portrays the critically dangerous condition in his store as a war. He claims that “there is no end to war... It’s a sign of social disease; there’s no end, no solution.” He is

definite that there is no hope for further growth for him. In addition, he doubts that even “the second, third, or fourth generation born in the U.S. [will] ever be equal.” Thus only drink can numb the pain of hopelessness.

Although Hyung experienced much racism in society and classism in church, her disappointment did not turn into despair. She is hopeful that things will change “little by little” as long as there are people who do not give up. She belongs to one of those people who struggle to assist other Koreans to adjust to this country and to help “white Americans” to appreciate the ethnicities of other people.

7. Education plays a significant role in expanding the perimeter of one’s life in America, and people are clearly aware of this fact. People who are educated in this country know the system better so they have more opportunities to try something new. James, a first generation immigrant himself, was able to be “successful” because he studied in America and knew the society. Dong Hwan, who is a college graduate in Korea but with no education in America, feels “disabled” and “handicapped.” If he could go to school, he expects that his circumstances might improve. Having no time to do so, however, he repeatedly blames his lack of education as the cause for being a cripple in America. Hyun Yi also acknowledges the significance of education. She has a hard time because her parents do not understand what she is studying and are unable to support her fully, both intellectually and emotionally. Her frustration is the gap between the two generations. Through education, she expects that the next generation will not go through similar struggles.

Young and Hyung strongly believe that education can bring changes in the immigrants’ life. Young took her two sons to the public library every week and

supported them in every possible way to help them excel academically. Hyung was convinced that education was the only way she could “actively confront” and survive in the American society. Although other Koreans pointed fingers at her for attending school despite her financial difficulty, her strong belief in education made it possible for her to persist while raising two children.

8. The family tie is a strong theme for many people. Even though some have positive experiences with family members, including strong resentment, they maintain a strong family tie. Sean was sad that his mother neither took care of him nor knew him much. Yet, in spite of his many worries such as finishing school, gangsters chasing him, his primary worry is his family that is going through a financial crisis. He really wants to help his family. Moreover, he often expresses his understanding for his mom. Rather than blaming her, he accepts her reasons for concealing the existence of his father’s family in Korea and for not understanding his “American” culture.

Hyun Yi has extraordinary feelings about her parents. She is somewhat sorry that her parents could not support her financially, emotionally, or intellectually, but she is grateful for what they were able to do. She believes that “they did the best they could, given the circumstances of their lives.” Even after giving her fellowship money and student loans to her parents to pay their bills, she still feels guilty for not helping them more.

James invites his half-brothers to America and helps them to settle down. He also supported his father and stepmother who have caused the death of his mother and deep pains in him and his brothers. He honestly confesses that he still feels resentment, but maintains a close connection to the family. It is ironic that he initially came to America

in order to “escape from family problems.” When he settles down, however, he initiates and rebuilds a strong, yet somewhat uncomfortable tie with his family. He prefers to have a connection with his family, though it may be painful, rather than completely cutting them off.

9. Within the theme of family, there is a strong sense of supporting each other which includes financial, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. Many want to do more, but they feel incapable despite their desire to do so. Hyun Yi is one who is most aware of familial support. Her parents are unable to support her in many ways. Since she was young, she worked along with her parents for financial reasons. When she began graduate school, she sent money to them to help their financial crisis. She expressed great anguish for being unable to have an intellectual conversation with her parents while envying those who have the full support from their parents for their studies. However, she also feels guilty for not being able to help them.

Dong Hwan worries that he has “nothing to leave behind” if he dies, and he feels awful about having no time to spend with his children except when he drives them to school. Although Sean’s mother provided financial stability for him while he was young, she failed to give emotional support since she was not “the kind of person who was close to her kids.” However, since his family is facing financial difficulty, he tries hard to support her.

Kathy and her husband try hard to “support” their son Robin without imposing their “standards on him but to accept his standards and go from there.” Her parents also support her by baby-sitting Robin while she works. James went through struggles due to a lack of family support while in Korea: tutoring for his tuition, living without a father,

and then living without a mother and siblings. However, he feels confident about his support for his family. He helps his parents and all his brothers to be well-off, as well as his children who travel to different places and enjoy the opportunities given to them.

John was thankful most to his family members who understood him and patiently waited for him while he “went astray.” He recalled the painful moments his parents looked into his eyes without a word. He somehow knew all along that he was meant to “come back” because of his mother’s earnest and ceaseless prayer. Knowing what they have gone through because of him, he feels he owes them so much.

Hyung loves her children and wants to support them rather than be a “burden” to them; so she studies. She doesn’t want her children to grow up and be her “spokesperson.” The spokesperson takes care of most family affairs for parents. In that sense, her children are the “source of energy” for her study. Young has tried really hard to raise her children in a foreign land. She has done everything she possibly could, but still feels limited because she lacks information compared to “other American parents.” She is sorry for what she cannot do for them.

10. Christian faith and church is a significant dimension in everyone’s story. All three families of my interviewees were Christians in Korea, but they all have come to know God more closely while living in America. John thought God was far away from him, but through a tough and lonely life in America, he realized that, “God was close, walking and suffering with” him. Young’s image of God is Immanuel, “God who is with me, always good and helping.” Hyung’s image of God also changed from a fearful judge to her “helper” and “guide” in immigrant life. Sean is grateful that he survived many deaths because “God saved [him] many times.”

Church functions as the center of immigrant life. From the very early days of immigration, the majority attended church. Initially, their close relatives were resources to immigrant life, but gradually church replaced the role and became the most crucial center for all three families. Young's relatives gather together only on special occasions, but her family attends various gatherings at church at least 4-6 times each week. Hyung's family also spends more time with church friends than with relatives. Hence, for most Christian immigrants, their life revolves around church rather than work or other social links.

However, church has its weaknesses and often fails to provide needs of immigrants. To Kathy, church *was* a very important community because she decided to start anew due to her involvement with the youth group. However, she no longer feels comfortable since church is not involved in building the community. To Dong Hwan, church is the only place he goes in addition to his store, but it does not seem to offer him much comfort.

Church often has not been very encompassing and inclusive in making the immigrant families feel at home. As new immigrants, both Hyung and John felt that church, as a group of people, did not accept or affirm them. Americanized second generation youth ignored and laughed at John when he had just arrived from Korea. As hostile as the outside society was, Hyung found the Koreans in the church to be similarly exclusive. Old members superficially greeted her without showing personal concern so that she was deeply hurt. She feels that, at this particular church, people are accepted and welcomed based on their social and economic status.

Constructing Theories (Theory Building)

Based on the themes drawn out from the stories, I begin to construct theories concerning life experiences of Korean Americans. I claim these theories to be not the final conclusion of my research, but a mere beginning. These theories, I expect, will be expanded and will bring many diverse lenses through which religious educators and ministers will come to understand the Korean Americans.

1. The life of the immigrants and their families are painted by discrimination, crises, barriers, disappointment, depression, and pain. The intensity is high in the beginning of the immigrant life, and it gradually decreases, but does not go away completely. In that sense, the meaning of a barrier becomes clear since the barriers remain, not allowing them to go deeper into the dominant culture to improve their life.

2. To immigrants, the term identity crisis does not seem to apply only to adolescents, but to all people. Regardless of their age, the immigrants experience that their existing language, culture, values, and beliefs are challenged by the dominant culture. Thus, multiple everyday life situations, that is, major change in their social status and class, language barrier, downward mobility in occupation, and racial discrimination, push them to a marginal place. The margin raises questions for them about their identity.

3. Despite all the difficulties, however, there is a strong resilience in the life of immigrants. They try extra hard to achieve their goals so that they demonstrate a life of hard work, effort, endurance, courage, and persistence. The hardships are not mainly the elements of bitterness, but more often they are turned into power and constructive energy, leading to enthusiastic life. As they face the hardships, they strive to overcome them and to move ahead, turning painful experiences into constructive opportunities.

4. Hope is a strong theme that underlies resilience. At the core of their endurance and energy to rise again is the hope that the future will be different. However, their present experiences within the dominant society determine the level of hope; people who have tasted some changes are hopeful while those who experienced severe racism and failure tend to terminate hope.

5. Education is one of the most effective ways to realize their hope. Education provides more opportunities in life and social mobility. Some first generation Koreans do not have much hope in their future, because they have experienced so much limitation due to language and age. Hence, the hope narrative is transferred to their children by supporting their children's academic achievement. They strongly believe that education can make the American dream come true in their children's generation. This might be a contributing factor to Korean parents' intensive attachment to children's academic success.

6. Family becomes a very crucial dimension in immigrant life. Due to Confucian values, family is very important to most people. Even though some do not have positive experiences with family members, they maintain a strong family tie. There is a deep sense of gratitude, concern, and regret for family members as well as financial and emotional support. Behind the apparent intergenerational conflict between the first and the second generations is passionate care and love for each other. It seems because their concern for each other is great, their conflicts intensify.

7. Immigrant context creates the need for strong family ties and support. In a foreign land, the social life of each family member is limited, and others are unknown and perceived as insecure. Therefore, family members become the most important and

dependable support group. Moreover, since they go through struggles and transitions at similar times, unity among the members can be a strong asset in overcoming struggles as immigrants.

8. Marginal experience of immigrant life often becomes a holy ground where people encounter God in a more personal and intimate way. Through hardships in a foreign country, they come to realize their weaknesses and frailty as human beings. In their limitedness, they seek God more earnestly than they did before immigration. In their wilderness experiences, they encounter God who is *with* them in their struggles and learn to depend upon God.

9. Church plays an important role in providing spiritual and social needs and strengthening immigrants to go on with their immigrant life. It functions as a place where people can come for comfort, from both God and fellow Koreans. Sharing their pains and sufferings, they receive spiritual comfort and guidance to endure the hardships of immigrant life. Although church is a part of life for majority Koreans, those who have had negative experiences with church have little expectations of it.

Conclusion

During the third wave of Korean immigration, urban and middle class people came to America in search of better opportunities for life and education. Their social and cultural adjustment in the new society was not a simple task. Displaying strong ethnic attachment in terms of language, social organization, and food, they show a low level of assimilation into the dominant culture. It seems that their tendency for ethnic attachment has deterred them from assimilating, but conversely, difficulty in assimilation also causes

them to stay close to their ethnic community and culture. Both factors seem to mutually affect each other.

In their life as ethnic minority, Korean immigrants experience much limitation, discrimination, identity crisis, and downward social mobility. The Los Angeles Riots have been a good portrait of the painful reality of discrimination against minority immigrants. They persistently work hard in search of their “American dream,” yet without really finding a “home.”

In terms of family issues, Confucian teachings on duty, obligation, and mutual dependence come into conflict with the Western value of individualism and independence. The rigid traditional values of Korean family system cause many dilemmas. Spouses struggle over their status within family due to wives’ increased economic power, wives are burdened by heavy load of work, conflict arises between the first and the second generations while the aged feel isolated and neglected. Although they need to search for ways to modify the differences, it is important to note that conflicts do not simply denote problems of Korean family value system. Conversely, conflicts signify the presence of strong relationship and attachment between family members, which is crucial in the life of immigrants as they struggle to adapt to the new culture together.

In the dark and gloomy immigrant life filled with pains, a colorful ray of bright light shines. It is the power of resilience in hope for the future. They endure hard work, giving extra effort to change their given circumstances. The resilience based on hope is one powerful element that energizes Korean immigrants to overcome hardships.

The experience of pains and sufferings bring a spiritual advantage to immigrants. They become vulnerable and meet God in the midst of their hardships. They *experience* God who is *with* them. For this reason, church becomes a center for Korean immigrants, renewing the meaning of their existence and empowering them to sustain their life.

Surveying much about the contemporary Korean immigrants, I now move to the next phase of the project: gathering resources to develop a Christian education model for Korean American families. In Chapter 3, I turn to the psychological concept of family resilience which becomes the frame of this model. Although Korean American families struggle with conflicts and issues, they need not be defeated. They can be nurtured to be resilient, to overcome these hardships and emerge even more powerful. The concept of resilience is the key to this conviction.

Chapter 3

FAMILY RESILIENCE: STRENGTH IN CONNECTION

In the process of familial development, a family faces diverse adaptive challenges regardless of its structure and patterns. In addition to stresses that are common to families in general, Korean immigrant families confront an additional major challenge: adaptation to the new culture. This single stress factor experienced by individual members multiplies, especially within family context, as it interacts with cultural differences and socioeconomic changes brought by immigration. As a result, Korean immigrant families suffer from marital discord, generational conflicts, a lack of communication, severance of relationship, low self-esteem, identity confusion, and so on.

In order to construct a religious education model to assist Korean immigrant families, I draw resources from the psychological concept of resilience which recognizes that individuals and families have strengths and the ability to deal with difficulties in life. They may overcome obstacles, or sometimes they may stumble and fall down. However, they do not remain defeated; they emerge stronger and more resourceful. Instead of viewing the family as a weak entity that causes dysfunctions in its members, family resilience focuses on the other side of the picture. While being influenced by family members, the family, in turn, affects family members and assists them not only to overcome crisis but also to grow and transform from those experiences. This notion of family resilience becomes the core of the religious education model for Korean American families.

I begin this chapter with a general understanding of stress and coping from which the concept of resilience emerges. After providing the definitions of stress, coping, risk, vulnerability, buffer, and resilience, I explore a contemporary understanding of resilience in depth. Resilience comes from both personal and social resources, and this notion leads to the significance of relational competence. Then I introduce Froma Walsh's family resilience framework which articulates processes of resilient families. After each section, I interweave the situation of Korean American immigrants in order to contextualize the theories in terms of their experience.

Theory of Stress and Coping

Recent studies in psychology have paid special attention to stress and coping so that multiple theories and methodologies have emerged. The general movement in this area of study parallels three major influences in contemporary psychology: a complex interplay between nature and nurture in development, a sense of self-efficacy and the development of optimism and motivation, and the significance of social context for development. Coping theory is very much shaped by these notions.

Stress and Coping

Traditionally, stress was understood as an environmental stimulus that placed pressure on an object. Known as stimulus-response (S-R) theories of stress and coping, these models have identified common key stressors for adults or children without taking diverse responses of individual into account.¹ S-O-R theories ('O' standing for

¹ Erica Frydenberg, "Understanding Coping: Towards a Comprehensive Theoretical Framework," in *Learning to Cope: Developing as a Person in Complex Societies*, ed. Erica Frydenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11-12.

organismic variables) have come into view, noting each individual as a variable that affects the response to stress.² The latter view, prominently presented by Richard S. Lazarus and his colleagues, is called a “transactional” model of stress as it assumes that “the individual is in an ongoing interaction with the environment.”³ In the course of dynamic interaction, both the person and the demands are subject to change.

Lazarus’ definition of coping is helpful for a more comprehensive understanding of stress and coping. Coping is “the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person.”⁴ The definition informs one that stress can be both external and internal demands that are bound by context of the individual. Coping implies a purposeful action, involving cognitive and/or behavioral attempts that the individual makes in order to deal with stress placed upon the self. In this sense, coping is “effort” that can lead to either a successful removal of stress or a failure to do so. Both stress and coping are perceived as an on-going process which changes during the course of an encounter.⁵

Risk

Risk is another term frequently used in stress and coping theories. Although it is often used interchangeably with stress, risk needs to be clarified in relation to and distinction from stress. Traditionally, risk was identified as a static term such as “a marker, a stressor, or a ‘factor’ predicting undesirable outcomes” that threatens the well-

² Ibid., 11.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Richard S. Lazarus, *Emotion and Adaptation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 112.

⁵ Ralf Schwarzer and Steffen Taubert, “Tenacious Goal Pursuits and Striving Toward Personal Growth: Proactive Coping,” in *Beyond Coping: Meeting Goals, Visions, and Challenges*, ed. Erica Frydenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20; Frydenberg, 18.

being of individuals.⁶ For example, poverty and marital conflict are risk factors that can lead to a dysfunctional result. However, Michael Rutter notes the significance of the process of risks over and against the identification of markers. He argues that certain variables that are easily perceived as a risk factor can lead to multiple outcomes; shyness can be a risk factor when it develops depression in the person, but it can also be a protective factor when it prevents the same person from being highly aggressive.⁷ For this reason, risk “must always be defined with reference to a specific negative outcome” clarifying “what they are at risk for.”⁸ In this sense, risk can be distinguished from stress as the former is always linked to negative outcomes while the latter is the state of unbalance between the demand of a situation and the individual’s resources to deal with it, and it is open to diverse outcomes in the process of coping.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to tendencies to be easily wounded, and it “increases probability of a specific negative or undesirable outcome in the presence of a risk.”⁹ It operates only when risk is present. An analogy can be a boat with loosely patched cracks. When the weather is good, the boat remains intact; when the storm comes, the boat is vulnerable, that is, it is at risk for damage. The sources of vulnerabilities are many. Inner weaknesses such as genetic factors to disorder, low self-esteem, certain personality traits, and depression are vulnerabilities.¹⁰ External conditions such as ineffective parenting and marital conflict can make children vulnerable, at risk for aggressive

⁶ Philip A. Cowan, Carolyn Pape Cowan, and Mark S. Schulz, “Thinking about Risk and Resilience in Families,” in *Stress, Coping, and Resiliency in Children and Families*, ed. E. Mavis Hetherington and Elaine A. Blechman (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 9.

⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

behavior. At times, it is hard to distinguish vulnerability from risks since a variable can be perceived as vulnerability as it has a negative effect. Vulnerability intensifies the undesirable outcomes under existing risk factors.

Buffer

Buffer can be understood as the opposite concept of vulnerability since it “decreases the probability of a negative or undesirable outcome in the presence of a risk.”¹¹ It is also called “protective factors” as it protects individuals from prospective harm.¹² Buffering must be distinguished from low risk since it describes “what happens to reduce the incidence or severity of the anticipated negative outcomes under risk conditions.”¹³ Under the same risk condition, individuals who are fortunate enough to have certain buffers will emerge with less negative effects than those who do not have any.

Resilience

The concept of resilience can be better understood by referring to risk, vulnerability, and buffer. All three terms are on “the stimulus side” of S-R equation, shaping the response, or the outcome; “risk as a predisposer to negative or undesirable outcomes, vulnerability as an amplifier of the probability of negative outcomes in the presence of risk, and buffering as a reducer of the probability of negative outcomes despite risk.”¹⁴ The notion of resilience, or stress-resistant, is detectable by focusing on the outcome, or the response. While many people expectedly arrive at dysfunctional

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² Margot Prior, “Resilience and Coping: The Role of Individual Temperament,” in *Learning to Cope: Developing as a Person in Complex Societies*, ed. Erica Frydenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 34.

¹³ Cowan, Cowan, and Schulz, 13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 13-14.

outcomes because of risk, some thrive and emerge stronger and more resourceful despite the risk. An active coping process, in which vulnerability is minimized and buffering maximized, can build resilience. In this sense, resilience can be seen as a product of buffering processes.

In terms of stress and coping, resilience can be perceived as a successful coping strategy, but not isomorphic with the term coping. Resilience is “behaviours and processes involved in the capacity to maintain positive adaptation and healthy functioning in a challenging or unhealthy context, or, the ability to maintain competence or mastery of life under stress.”¹⁵ It refers not to a finished response to stress, but continuous processes of maintaining good functioning, recovery, and even growth.¹⁶ To reiterate, resilience is “the human capacity to deal with, overcome, learn from, or even be transformed by the inevitable adversities of life.”¹⁷

The Experience of Korean Americans

The theory of stress and coping is highly relevant to immigrants since the immigrant experience involves stress and coping, namely, acculturation stress and the task of readjustment. Behavioral scientist Zeev Ben-Sira maintains that immigration places intense stress upon individuals regardless of their strong motivation and preparation since it causes a drastic change in immigrants’ lives. However, it is notable that change itself is not the key factor that causes stress. Stress involves four factors: “internal needs and values, external environmental demands and constraints, personal

¹⁵ Prior, 34.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Edith Henderson Grotberg, “What is Resilience? How Do You Promote It? How Do You Use It?” in *Resilience for Today: Gaining Strength from Adversity*, ed. Edith Henderson Grotberg (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 1.

resources or capabilities, and external environmental supplies and supports.”¹⁸ When imbalance is produced from the interaction among these components, that is, when resources are insufficient for the needs and demands, stress is experienced.

The interaction of the first two elements can be explained through the motivation of migration and the reality of immigrant life. In their study of acculturating groups, John Berry and David Sam distinguish between the voluntary and involuntary nature of the contact; immigrants fall into the voluntary group that makes a choice to migrate, whereas refugees are involuntary.¹⁹ Initiating changes voluntarily, the immigrants’ stress might be relatively less as compared to refugees. However, studies show that they undergo “more problems than their voluntary status would suggest.”²⁰ The reason is explained by the “unprecedented demands and unmet expectations” of immigrants.²¹ Based on push factors of the native country and pull factors of the new country, immigrants pre-calculate goals and rewards along with the costs they are willing to pay upon immigration. Disappointment comes from the realities of the new society in which their “illusionary stereotypes of the American life” are shattered as they face unprecedented demands.²² Because their initial hopes and expectations are high, the demanding reality becomes unbearable.

As immigrants, Korean Americans are at risk for maladjustment as they face major changes in all the dimensions of life. As a result, they experience severe stress. They are at low risk because of their urbanization experience, high education, financial

¹⁸ Zeev Ben-Sira, introduction to *Immigration, Stress, and Readjustment* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), xii.

¹⁹ Berry and Sam, 295.

²⁰ Ibid., 303.

²¹ Ben-Sira, 14.

²² Ibid., 10.

power, and skills. They are well-prepared and fit for life in American society. In terms of stress-coping theory, they have many buffers such as their voluntary motivation for migration, close family structure, and a strong ethnic community. However, they are vulnerable at the same time. The drastic difference between Korean and Western culture creates ambivalence in them. They experience downward mobility in terms of occupation. Their families become somewhat dysfunctional due to intergenerational conflicts and role reversal between the husband and wife and between parents and children. Their high education is not utilized because of the language barrier and racism. Hence, they lose self-esteem and a sense of mastery, important elements for readjustment.²³ Their expectations for economic and political stability and better educational opportunities for their children do not come easily. Many families run successful small businesses, but the reward of economic stability is attained at the cost of intense family labor, often damaging familial relationships.

The resilient outcome for immigrants is readjustment. It is also defined as “integration” as opposed to assimilation, separation, and marginalization.²⁴ Or, “biculturalism” is perceived as a successful and the most preferred form of adaptation, or a resilient outcome, in terms of ethnic identity formation.²⁵ Therefore, the successful coping strategy for Korean American immigrants can be perceived as integrating into the

²³ Ibid., 114.

²⁴ Berry and Sam, 296-97.

²⁵ See Francisca Infante with Alexandra Lamond, “Resilience and Biculturalism: The Latino Experience in the United States,” in *Resilience for Today: Gaining Strength from Adversity*, ed. Edith Henderson Grotberg (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 169. In relation to resilience, the writers state that “biculturalism is a resilient outcome because it implies a set of values, behaviors, and social service availability that allows positive adaptation despite the constraints given by poverty and discrimination.”

dominant society without losing their ethnicity and adjusting to the new life as competent bicultural persons.

Resilience in Context

Then, how do people withstand and rebound from adversities? What makes individuals become resilient in stressful situations? What serves as buffers in the process of stress-coping?

Appraisal Theory

Lazarus' and Folkman's appraisal theory is crucial in understanding resilience. When an individual is placed under stress, he or she goes through two steps of appraisal: (primary) demand appraisals and (secondary) resource appraisals.²⁶ In the primary appraisal, the individual assesses whether the situation is a challenge, threat, and harm/loss, and in the secondary, he or she measures the adequacy of one's resources. Other scholars have indicated that these two steps are mutually interrelated. Stress is determined to be a threat when the individual assesses the resources to be inadequate, and conversely, it is appraised as a challenge if he or she is confident in the resources. The appraisal of stress has direct influence on the response of the individual and determines the coping strategies one will use: active coping, internal coping, and withdrawal.²⁷ Moreover, appraising stress as a challenge and a benefit shifts the concept of coping from mere adaptation to a positive dimension of meeting goals and resource gain.²⁸ This movement is in line with proactive coping and resilience, which will be discussed later.

²⁶ Freydenberg, 12.

²⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

²⁸ Schwarzer and Taubert, 24.

Resource Theory

Resource theory provides a crucial link at this point. As Lazarus claims, under stressful situations individuals appraise whether they have enough resources to cope with the crisis. A resource is not merely one's self-efficacy and sense of confidence, but also "the capacity to organize 'centrally' and utilize the resources inherent within oneself and to draw upon those resources from the environment."²⁹ For this reason, scholars generally categorize resources into two groups: personal resources and social resources.³⁰ Personal resources refer to "the internal coping options" which includes temperaments, personality, other intrinsic qualities such as hardiness, personal competence, skills, health, optimism, capability, sense of coherence (comprehensibility, manageability, meaningfulness), self-esteem, sense of control, intentionality, and self-efficacy.³¹

Social resources are "environmental options that are available," and they can come from various routes such as family members, friends, social organizations, or other social and religious networks.³² Multiple social ties can buffer against stress and prevent people from various physical and psychological dysfunctions. Social support can be divided into three domains based on the nature of support: emotional support, instrumental support, and information support.³³ Emotional support is received when another person is available to discuss problems and share feelings in confidentiality. Instrumental support comes from persons who provide assistance with important

²⁹ Freydenberg, 13.

³⁰ Schwarzer and Taubert, 22.

³¹ Ibid.; Freydenberg, 13-14.

³² Schwarzer and Taubert, 22.

³³ Thomas Ashby Willis, Elaine A. Blechman, and Grace McNamara, "Family Support, Coping, and Competence," in *Stress, Coping, and Resiliency in Children and Families*, ed. E. Mavis Hetherington and Elaine A. Blechman (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996) 109.

instrumental tasks such as transportation and finance. Informational support involves attaining advice and information about other community resources.

Interaction between the Personal and Social Resources

However, the personal and social resources are closely related, and the interaction between the two engenders resilience. Emmy Werner and Ruth Smith's multidisciplinary study on children from Kauai Island demonstrates the individuals' influence on the environment. In a very comprehensive longitudinal study, they researched children who grew up in an economically and socially challenging time.³⁴ Their findings were that despite the devastating circumstances, some children emerged as "competent and autonomous young adults who 'worked well, played well, loved well, and expected well.'"³⁵ The intrapersonal characteristics of resilient children were distinctive: an absence of serious health problems during infancy, active, affectionate, good natured, alert, independent, curious, sociable, sense of control, positive self-concept, and responsibility. The environmental traits of these children included a smaller family size, presence of a good care-giver, positive role-models, and emotional support from other people. The researchers articulate the importance of temperament characteristics, but they also note the power of relationship with their environment. Most of the resilient children had a caring person who supported them and provided enduring assistance. The

³⁴ See Emmy E. Werner and Ruth S. Smith, *Vulnerable but Invincible: A Longitudinal Study of Resilient Children and Youth* (New York: Adams, Bannister, Cox, 1989). The study began in 1955 and lasted for over 30 years. They collected birth and early developmental records from homes, children's learning progress reports and assessments from school teachers, and other follow-up records when the children reached the ages of 18 and 31.

³⁵ Ibid., 153.

quality relationship was a major source of energy that helped them to overcome misfortunes in their life.³⁶

The innate traits of these children affected the interaction they had with their environment, shaping the way they respond to events and people, and this in turn influencing the way people responded to them. Children who were “able to elicit predominantly positive responses from their environment” displayed resilience while those who drew out negative responses remained “vulnerable.”³⁷ Temperament was crucial not only for building up personal competence and adjustment, but also for shaping and maintaining the quality relationship with others. In short, the ongoing interactional disposition of self and the environment is at play in the notion of resilience.

On the other hand, the influence of social resources on the development of individual competence is also acknowledged in extended studies on resilience. In *Resilience: Learning from People with Disabilities and the Turning Points in Their Lives*, Gillian King and her colleagues survey people with disabilities and conclude that “the resilient self” is developed as “the support of family, friends, and other people contributes to resilience on the level of the individual.”³⁸ To provide a clear notion of the resilient self, they delineate three components of *self*: self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. The self-concept is a self-understanding of how people perceive their personal characteristics which includes “the beliefs, ideas, and attitudes we have about

³⁶ Ibid., 97-98; 155-57.

³⁷ Ibid., 158.

³⁸ Colleen Willoughby, Elizabeth G. Brown, Gillian A. King, Jacqueline Specht, and Linda K. Smith, “The Resilient Self- What Helps and What Hinders?” in *Resilience: Learning from People with Disabilities and the Turning Points in Their Lives*, ed. Gillian A. King, Elizabeth G. Brown, and Linda K. Smith (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 91.

ourselves.”³⁹ Self-esteem is the overall value that individuals place on themselves, and it is largely “created by our competencies, relative to others, and the support we get from other people,” and it helps persons to overcome successfully the adversities of life.⁴⁰ The third element self-efficacy is “our estimation of how well we can carry out the actions necessary to deal with life events.”⁴¹ It is feeling competent and effective, capable of making changes in their own lives as well as in others.’

A close study of people with disabilities reveals that resilience in an individual does not come from oneself alone, but is constructed through social support.⁴² By providing emotional, practical, and informational assistance, social support influences all three aspects of the self. The authors write:

Social support can provide a sense of belonging and intimacy (emotional support), thereby enhancing self-esteem. Social support can help individuals feel competent, thereby enhancing self-efficacy. And social support can provide information that increases the accuracy of self-perception, thereby strengthening a person’s self-concept.⁴³

Social support group can be largely defined as family, friends, and community, yet studies show that the existence of only one caring person with unconditional love can help people from possible dysfunctional outcomes.⁴⁴ A supportive person helps others to value themselves and provides them with encouragement to sustain despite adversity. In this sense, the resilient self can be understood as the product of social support.

³⁹ Ibid., 93.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁴¹ Ibid., 94.

⁴² Ibid., 109.

⁴³ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 118.

Resilience and Relational Competence

While many studies focus on unilateral influence of supportive people on individuals who are seeking help, some focus on interaction among all persons who are involved in relationships. One such theory revolves around the themes of connection and context.

Connection has emerged as an important theme in human development during the last few decades. The traditional understandings, or the separate-self models, have perceived autonomy, independence, and individual success through competition to be the core dimension of individual development. Studies on women have illuminated the other side of human development: connection, belongingness, and growth-fostering relationships. Carol Gilligan, critiquing Kohlberg's conception of morality, maintains that men and women use fundamentally different approaches to making moral decisions.⁴⁵ While male morality has a "justice orientation," valuing individual rights and rules, female morality has a "responsibility orientation," feeling responsible to care for all people and desiring for connection. Moreover, because they see the complexities of relationships, women tend to hesitate to judge. Jean Baker Miller points out the significance of human development in relationships.⁴⁶ In the dynamics between dominant and subordinates, the latter (often women) learn to develop based on their roles so that they tend to build self-negation in helping the development of the former. However, their participation in others' growth elicits the awareness of the human need for cooperation and affiliation with one another.

⁴⁵ Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

⁴⁶ Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976).

The conventional separate-self model is challenged and enriched by the self-in-relation, or self-in-context model. The new model highlights the relational dimension of human development and existence, and integrates race, class, gender, and culture as various contexts that structure human beings. Expanding the context of individual and acknowledging the multiplicity of it brings a much more complete and accurate picture of human reality.

It is in this milieu that Judith Jordan and her colleagues from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute explore the complexity of connection. Jordan begins with the significance of competence, particularly in context. She clarifies that the word "competence" is rooted in Latin words *com* and *petere*, referring to "together" and "to aim at, go toward," respectively.⁴⁷ Sharing the same roots, the word "compete" originally meant "to strive after [something] in company or together," but later changed to include the meaning of "rivalry," thus implying competitive and mastery images to the concept of competence.⁴⁸ Not only these models create conflict for people who have not been "the masters" such as women and the racial minority people, but they also construct a deceptive meaning of competence.

Competence is developed, Jordan contests, not by being autonomous and by standing above others, but by having effective interactions with environment. When people realize that they have significant influence on others, they feel competent. On the contrary, without having meaningful relationships in which they have no effect, they become rather incompetent. Therefore, competence is not individualistic and competitive

⁴⁷ Judith V. Jordan, "Toward Competence and Connection," in *The Complexity of Connection: Writings from the Stone Center's Jean Baker Miller Training Institute*, ed. Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker, and Linda M. Hartling (New York: Guilford Press, 2004), 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

in nature as the separate-self model promotes, but it is developed in context through connection. Competence is not in opposition to connection; it *comes from* connection. This, she contends, is relational competence.⁴⁹

Jordan defines relational competence as “the capacity to move another person, to effect a change in a relationship, or effect the well-being of all participants in the relationship.”⁵⁰ Relational competence concerns all persons who are involved in the relationship, and it produces mutual growth and empowerment rather than “a sense of power” on one side.⁵¹ An individual who has relational competence displays the capacity to engage in “growth-fostering relationships.”⁵² She further expounds on the essential elements of relational competence:

Movement toward mutuality and mutual empathy (caring and learning flows both ways), where empathy expands for both self and other; the development of anticipatory empathy, noticing and caring about our impact on others; being open to being influenced; enjoying relational curiosity; experiencing vulnerability as inevitable and a place of potential growth rather than danger; creating good connection rather than exercising power over others as the path of growth.⁵³

Relational competence is having competency in relationship that one can grow, be encouraged and strengthened through relationships. Hence, being in need and asking for help is not a sign of incompetence; rather, it is a sign of relational competence.

Another important point is that relational competence is generally not an inborn nature. It is to be fostered and learned in relationship through an active engagement of “the vision, philosophy, emotional and cognitive skills, and the development of relational

⁴⁹ Ibid., 13-15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

practice.”⁵⁴ Community building must be an intentional movement in which dialogue, sharing, and cooperative efforts are encouraged so that people will be empowered in their relationships. A powerful image of relational competence is giant sequoia trees. Although they have shallow roots, their roots intertwine and support one another to grow tall and strong. In the same way, people build a true sense of competence, which becomes the basis of resilience, through encouragement and support within community “*by community as we build community.*”⁵⁵

The Experience of Korean Americans

For a successful coping strategy, both personal and social resources are important, and the interaction between the two becomes significant and vital. Social resources engender competence in individuals; that is, personal resources are enriched by social resources. For immigrants, the role of social resources becomes crucial because social resources can greatly shape personal resources and help immigrants deal with the unprecedented demands they face in a new society.

For immigrants’ successful readjustment, scholars point out various communities as social resources. First of all, the “absorbing society” becomes the key environment: “the social dynamics in the absorbing society will be the decisive starting point for the process of adjustment.”⁵⁶ If the pervasive perspective of the absorbing society is discriminatory and hostile towards immigrants, it becomes hard for them to adapt to their new life in the absorbing society. The absorbing society, or the dominant culture, is the external environment which places demands and constraints on immigrants and also

⁵⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 25 (italics in original).

⁵⁶ Ben-Sira, 11.

provides necessary resources and supports through “formal agencies whose function is to assist immigration.”⁵⁷

Korean Americans have experienced both positive and negative perspectives of the absorbing society. The Immigration Act of 1965 was a big welcome for immigrants. The opportunity to become a U.S. Citizen affords equal opportunity as well as access to social services and education. Moreover, equality and mutual relationship of Western ideology is a great advantage for immigrants. However, racial discrimination is a pervasive reality. Children experience prejudice and racism at school while adults often face threats and violence at work. By focusing on small businesses, Korean Americans have played the middleman minority role which has caused them to become targets of hostility and violence. Boycotts and strikes against Korean retailers were frequent, and the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 became a fatal blow.

The second social resource I point out is the Korean American church which falls into “informal (mainly ethnic) mutual-help associations.”⁵⁸ The Christian church is the most active, informal, ethnic community for Korean Americans. It plays both religious and social functions that are inherently intertwined. As a basic grass-roots, community organization, it functions as a surrogate of ethnic neighborhoods, a broker between immigrants and dominant community, an extended family, and a nurturer of Korean culture and nationalism, as mentioned in Chapter 2. Through education and communal assistance, the church not only provides the resources needed, but also builds competence in individuals and families. The church is the first and foremost community to which most Korean Americans turn in times of crisis.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

However, the church is not the perfect community. Korean Americans experience discrimination and classism within their own ethnic church. Its hierarchical structure oppresses women, while the strict cultural conservatism and religious commitment of the first generation causes the second generation to leave the church. It is also indifferent to outside society. Kathy, Dong Hwan, and Hyung (interviewees from Chapter 2) have been immensely disappointed in the church, but since it is the main social context for Dong Hwan, he feels hopeless.

Lastly, the family is the primary environmental resource. Although family members are struggling together in the acculturation process, it plays a supportive role. This function is more evident in families that are from cultures in which the family is central.⁵⁹ The members provide emotional and financial assistance as well as nurturance. As parents, Korean Americans try their best to support their children's education. Sean, Hyun Yi, and John express a deep gratitude and concern for their parents. James invites and helps his half-brothers to settle down in America, although he still feels resentment towards them.

Yet, immigrant families are disadvantaged and hindered to be the strong environmental resources, particularly because they exist in a foreign social context. Parental support is limited and their functioning immobilized in many ways due to the lack of experience and knowledge of the new society. As the two different cultural values clash within the family, Korean Americans experience intergenerational conflicts. The children often turn to gangs that understand them better while parents helplessly lament their incapability to guide their own children.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 101.

All three social environmental resources (family as primary, the ethnic church and the absorbing society as the secondary) not only provide emotional, instrumental, and informational support, but also build competence in Korean Americans. Through their connection to these environmental resource groups, immigrants are continuously encouraged to cope actively with their stress. Supportive social resources and relationships build competence in them to be resilient. However, the environmental communities also fail to nurture competence. The task remaining is for these communities to be effective and encouraging so that all people who live within will be strengthened. The members are responsible for this task since they make up and shape their own communities.

Family Resilience

The place where relational competence and resilience can be effectively nurtured is family. Despite diminished and weakened functions of modern family, the concepts of relational competence and resilience redirect one's attention to family and its significance to the well-being of individuals.

Family as the Crucible of Competence

Because family is the most essential and influential community for all people their experience of connection and relationship in family leaves a perennial mark. Colleen Willoughby and her colleagues write on the significance of familial relationships:

Family is the most basic context for relationships. Family is the site of our earliest and often most enduring relationships. Relationships with family members have a fundamental influence on us. Family relationships shape our attitudes, outlooks, motivations, strategies for achievement, and ways of coping with challenges. Family relationships and experiences deeply affect our competence

and sense of belonging, which in turn contributes to our self-esteem, and thereby our resilience and sense of well-being in life.⁶⁰

Family relationships are so powerful that experiences in no other community can be as vital and evocative.

Don Edgar also affirms that family is “the crucible in which is forged the child’s developing competence.”⁶¹ Considering coping skills as a “subset” of competence, he further explores the concept of competence. In addition to biological and genetic elements of competence and individuals’ inborn multiple intelligence and capacities, he notes more important dimensions of competence; competence is “socially distributed” and it can be “self-defined.”⁶² Competence is constructed within the family based on several factors: the resources available in the family, the feedback from family members, and the interpretation a child makes of the feedback.⁶³ Therefore, the child is affected by “the whole cultural ecology surrounding” which include an individual’s different experience based on his or her personality, birth order or sex, structures of parental control, parental discipline styles, education level of parents, a family’s economic status, parental support, and so on.⁶⁴ These family contexts can either enhance or restrict the development of a competent self. Edgar maintains that family and social systems must provide the “equipment for competence and some sense of the competent self” to

⁶⁰ Willoughby, et al., 111.

⁶¹ Don Edgar, “Families as the Crucible of Competence in a Changing Social Ecology,” in *Learning to Cope: Developing as a Person in Complex Societies*, ed. Erica Frydenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 109-10.

⁶² Ibid., 113.

⁶³ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 119-21.

children so that they will have “a caravan of resources” to draw from when they inevitably come across disruptive life challenges.⁶⁵

Key Processes of a Resilient Family

The most crucial question concerning family resilience involves the “how”; how does one promote resilience in family? Froma Walsh, a prominent scholar of family resilience, presents key processes of resilient families.

Rather than blaming family as the contributor of individual crisis or dysfunction, current studies attribute to family strength and resilience which enable the individual to emerge healthy and successful. Referring to Werner’s and Smith’s study of children from Kauai, Walsh highlights “the crucial influence of significant relationship” which provided support and encouragement throughout their struggles in the face of adversity.⁶⁶ She articulates the source of family resilience and again, it is not certain static traits or the form of family, but *family processes* and they “mediate the recovery of all members and their relationships [and] enable the family system to rally in times of crisis, buffering stress, reducing the risk of dysfunction, and supporting optimal adaptation.”⁶⁷ The effective use of these key family processes can lead families not only to survive the crisis, but to “emerge stronger and more resourceful in meeting future challenges.”⁶⁸

While taking ecological and developmental perspectives of family functioning into account, she develops the family resilience framework for clinical application purposes. Based on various studies and their findings, she draws out common key

⁶⁵ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁶ Froma Walsh, “Family Resilience: Strengths Forged through Adversity,” in *Normal Family Processes: Growing Diversity and Complexity*, ed. Froma Walsh, 3rd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 401. For fuller elaboration, see Froma Walsh, *Strengthening Family Resilience* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

processes and integrates them into three domains of family functioning: family belief systems, organization patterns, and communication processes.

1. Family Belief Systems

Family belief systems are extremely important because they shape how families evaluate crisis situations and also provide hope despite adversarial conditions. Resilient families approach hardship as “a shared challenge” and try to overcome it together. Rather than being overwhelmed by crisis situations, they broaden their perspective and make meaning out of adversity so that it is accepted as a normal and understandable course of life. By gaining a sense of coherence and modifying a crisis as “a challenge that is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful to tackle,” resilient families make positive appraisal of the situation and effective responses to it.⁶⁹

Family belief systems also offer a positive outlook for the future. Hope, or “a future-oriented belief,” is vital for resilience since it “fuels energy and efforts to rise above adversity.”⁷⁰ Although the present is murky, having hope can pull families through adversity. However, the concept of *learned optimism* affirms that successful experience and a nurturing community context are essential to sustain hope. Optimism is nurtured in families by focusing on and affirming family strengths and potential.⁷¹ Continuous encouragement, support, and confidence in one another cultivate persistence. Resilient families with positive attitudes take initiative, accept the situation, and make the most of it by doing what they are capable of.

Another significant feature of belief systems is transcendence and spirituality.

Transcendent belief enables one to see the meaning and purpose beyond immediate crisis

⁶⁹ Ibid., 407.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 408.

⁷¹ Ibid., 409.

situation. Spiritual resources come from faith in cultural and religious tradition, or from connections with nature or a higher power. The support of a congregation and spiritual rituals are proven to have a positive influence on people with a health crisis. With a sense of divine meaning in life, people not only overcome crises, but experience growth and transformation.

2. Family Organizational Patterns

The second domain of resilient family functioning involves family organizational patterns. The flexible family structure enables families to reorganize a new sense of normality and restructure patterns of interaction after crisis events. However, continuity and stability must be maintained for successful adaptation. While holding onto the ties with the integral parts of family values, its structure must allow new changes for the family to function. Effective parenting can be described as “firm yet flexible authoritative leadership” which provides nurturance, protection, and guidance.⁷²

Another core process is connectedness, which can be displayed through dynamics such as mutual support and commitment during a crisis. While respecting individual differences as each member needs time and space to deal with crisis events, the family members can strive to be there for one another to provide assistance and collaboration. If they are physically unavailable, other means of links for connection, such as photos, letters, or keepsakes can maintain the family tie. A strong sense of connection assures family members that they can turn to one another in stressful situations.⁷³

One effective family organizational pattern of resilient families includes social and economic resources. In the same way an individual cannot do it alone without family,

⁷² Ibid., 411.

⁷³ Ibid., 411-12.

families cannot overcome daunting obstacles alone without outside support, which comes through kin, friends, community groups, or religious congregations. Various community-based efforts to assist families to deal with major disasters can be found and used as models to facilitate communal support. Financial strain is a harsh reality for many families that hinders family resilience, and help must be available through social and institutional policies and practices.⁷⁴

3. Communication/Problem-solving Processes

The third domain of resilient family functioning is communication/problem-solving processes. Open and clear information sharing enhances understanding, effective decision making, and even recovery from painful experiences, whereas unclear hidden messages can generate unnecessary anxiety and disconnection among family members. Honest, yet age-appropriate approaches to communication nurture and sustain both parents and children as they struggle to comprehend and adapt to stressful situations.⁷⁵

Sharing emotion is critical, especially during crisis. Intense feelings build up over time and these emotions need to be expressed in a safe environment. When family members share feelings and encourage one another, their relationship is enriched through the crisis while suppressed emotions increase the probability of emotional explosion and catastrophic outcome. Individual and gender differences in emotions must be accepted as well as the expression of diverse feelings of joy and pain, hopes and fears.⁷⁶

Collaborative problem solving facilitates family resilience as the brainstorming brings out the family's rich resourcefulness. A shared effort to dealing with adversity must include the negotiation of differences, fairness, and reciprocity so that all members

⁷⁴ Ibid., 412-13.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 413-14.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 414.

will benefit from it. Resilient families set clear goals and take concrete steps, utilizing learning experiences from both success and failure. With a collaborative effort, it's possible to take a proactive stance, rather than a reactive mode, and prepare for future challenges.⁷⁷

Walsh's family resilience framework has several notable strengths. Rather than focusing on family deficits and weaknesses as the cause of family failure, it shifts its focus on family strengths by identifying and fostering those resources. Stressful situations do have disturbing influences on the whole family; however, in turn, "key family processes can mediate the adaptation of all members and the family unit."⁷⁸ This modification leads to positive adaptation and enhances family functioning. Strengthening key family processes and reducing vulnerability can build families' resourcefulness, not only to overcome a present crisis, but also to meet future challenges. Already widely used in clinical practice with families under chronic stress, its possibility for future use in various fields is immense.

Ethnicity and Family Resilience

Hamilton I. McCubbin's and his colleagues' work on resilience in ethnic families confirms Walsh's understanding of resilient family processes. By closely examining adjustment and adaptation processes of ethnic families, the scholars maintain that ethnicity and culture play a crucial role in a family's response to disruptive life

⁷⁷ Ibid., 414-15. See also Schwarzer and Taubert, 26-28. Proactive coping involves, unlike reactive coping, anticipatory, and preventive coping, "upcoming challenges that are seen as potentially self-promoting." Stress, which is generally considered a harm or threat in the other three types, is perceived as 'eustress,' or "productive arousal and vital energy." By assessing crises as challenges, people try to enrich resources and develop skills that would bring improvement in their lives. As they strive to promote "challenging goals and personal growth" through stress situations, coping is no longer "risk management," but "goal management."

⁷⁸ Walsh, "Family Resilience: Strengths Forged through Adversity," 415.

challenges. Familial adaptation is the outcome of the interactions among several components: the stressor, vulnerability, the established patterns of family functioning, and resistance resources. Yet, the key aspect is the family's "*appraisal of the stressor*" (i.e., the family's shared definition of the problem as being minor, a setback, or a catastrophe)" which interacts with "the family's problem-solving and coping strategies."⁷⁹ The appraisal process includes five fundamental levels: the family's schema, family coherence, family paradigms, situational appraisal, and stressor appraisal.⁸⁰

When adversity in life sabotages the established patterns of family functioning and requires family adaptation, the appraisal process becomes complex as all four levels (except the stressor appraisal) are called into action. Family routines are shifted and new paradigms emerge "to reinforce and legitimate" the new patterns of functioning.⁸¹ The family's sense of coherence maintains the family's confidence in the midst of adaptational changes. The core of the family's appraisal process, or the family's scheme, is also utilized. The family uses its dispositional worldview of beliefs, values, and meanings so that the crisis situation would be placed in the larger picture and hence

⁷⁹ Hamilton I. McCubbin, Marilyn A. McCubbin, Anne I. Thompson, and Elizabeth A. Thompson, "Resiliency in Ethnic Families: A Conceptual Model for Predicting Family Adjustment and Adaptation," in *Resiliency in Native American and Immigrant Families*, ed. Hamilton McCubbin, Elizabeth A. Thompson, Anne I. Thompson, and Julie E. Fromer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 6 (italics in original).

⁸⁰ See Ibid., 23-24. A family's schema refers to "a generalized structure of shared values, beliefs, goals, expectations, and priorities, shaped and adopted by the family unit" which functions as a framework to assess crisis situations, and further as a shaper of family's established patterns of functioning. A family's sense of coherence means "dispositional world view of confidence, comprehensibility, and manageability" and it shapes the family's paradigms. Family paradigm refers to "specific beliefs or expectations that guide the family's established patterns of functioning in such areas as marital relationships, child rearing, health care, and intergenerational relationships." Situational appraisal implies family's evaluation of the stress situation, and stressor appraisal means a "family's definition of the stressor" which takes place at the initial level of assessment.

⁸¹ Ibid., 25.

perceive it as less threatening. These changes will eventually lead to the adoption of new patterns of functioning, which will equip the family to function better.

Cultural values and beliefs are important because they underlie a family's schema and paradigms, influencing their appraisal and adaptation processes: "Ultimately, culture and ethnicity shape family functioning, particularly in response to the crisis situations in which the family's stability and continuity may be threatened."⁸² For example, a study of Native Hawaiian families shows that their schema is highly influenced by cultural values such as extended family structure, placing the needs of the whole above the individual, spirituality as part of the entire world, respect for nature and land, and perceiving time as relative and life as cyclical.⁸³ Along with these cultural values, the concepts of relational process and harmony also play significant roles in the adaptation process.⁸⁴ Therefore, "the holistic and complex interrelationships that come into harmony" become a resilient force in these ethnic families and help them respond to crises in constructive ways.⁸⁵

Ethnic and cultural values also belong to belief systems (the first process of resilient families) which offer a meaningful interpretation of the adversity and a positive outlook for the future. Moreover, as Walsh notes, culture deeply affects the patterns of family organization and communication/ problem-solving processes. Therefore, it is important for families to recognize and further promote certain ethnic and cultural values that are inherent since these values can greatly strengthen resilience.

⁸² Ibid., 26.

⁸³ Ibid., 26-27.

⁸⁴ See Ibid., 34. Relational process refers to "contextual or ecological perspective in which the individual, the family unit, nature and the spiritual world are interconnected and interdependent." Harmony is pursued in all realms of action and experience, and it can be characterized by the presence of energy and vitality.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 35.

The Experience of Korean Americans

In order to promote resilience in Korean American families, the three processes must be nurtured. Family belief systems are the strength of Korean immigrants for both religious and cultural reasons. Generally, Koreans are known to be very religious beings. Whether they were Christians prior to immigration or have met God during their immigrant life, the Christian faith has become a central dimension of life for many Korean Americans. They try to reinterpret the meaning of harsh immigrant life based on faith, and this new meaning offer them hope for the future. They regain energy and confidence from the church so that their toil is not meaningless, but has a purpose. Korean cultural values are also a part of their belief systems which influence the appraisal and adaptation processes. Koreans have many strong values that can promote resilience in families.

Family organizational patterns involve a flexible structure, connectedness to one another, and utilization of social and economic resources. For Korean American families, flexibility is often a very tough task. Experiencing drastic changes in the new culture, they feel threatened. Some tightly hold onto the traditional values and practices while others try to discard it all. Because Confucianism emphasizes proper behavior and patterns of actions, changing patterns of function become a difficult challenge for many Koreans. On the other hand, perceiving Korean tradition as a source of conflicts, some try to abandon it completely. While preserving their rich cultural values, appropriate changes in patterns and practices are necessary for effective functioning. Members of Korean families have strong connectedness due to their ethnic centrality on the family. Yet, cultural differences between the generations often cause gaps and detachment. The

Korean immigrants have displayed strong community organization and provided social and economic resources. However, as immigrants' life is centered on the church, resources are limited to and determined by what the church offers. The church's role is expanding the families' resources by providing various information and knowledge and also linking to other social institutions.

Communication /problem-solving processes refer to open and clear information sharing, expression of emotion, and collaborative problem solving. These functions are technically difficult for Koreans because they are not widely practiced in Korean culture. While discouraging open discussion of problems, the suppression of emotions and outward peace are encouraged. Collaboration is practiced to carry out a task, but not all members are invited to put their inputs into planning. Often women and children in particular are excluded from the decision making process, while being required to carry out their designated tasks. Cultural and language differences between generations may hinder the families to engage in effective communication/ problem-solving processes, but these differences can be viewed as a diversity which brings in multiple and rich voices and experiences.

Conclusion

The concept of resilience derives from the study of stress and coping can be a clue to Korean American families that face multiple crises due to immigration. With resilience, people do not merely respond to stress, but take an active approach and turn it into a positive experience; they learn and grow from it.

Several factors interplay in stress and coping. Stress comes when the internal or external demands tax available resources. Therefore, in stressful situations, individuals

are at risk for a negative outcome. If vulnerability is minimized and buffering maximized, people are likely to emerge stronger and more resourceful, namely, resilient. Korean immigrants are under stress due to drastic and pervasive changes required in the immigrant context, and they are at risk for maladjustment. While having their own vulnerabilities and buffers, they struggle to manage the stressful situation of immigration and to adapt successfully to the new society.

The appraisal process plays a significant role in coping. Depending on the resources available, one assesses the situation to be a challenge, threat, or harm. Resources are categorized into personal and social. Individual temperaments and personalities such as hardiness, coherence, and competence are important personal qualities of resilience. Social resources refer to emotional, instrumental, and informational support from the environment which includes family, friends, faith communities, etc. Yet, more important is the interaction between the two. Individual temperament and personality draw out positive responses from the environment while social resources build competence within individuals.

At this point, the notion of relational competence is helpful. Competence is not developed by being autonomous and competitive, but in interactions with the environment. It is developed in relations with other people. Therefore, it is called relational competence, and it is the basis of resilience. Relational competence is not inherent, but must be nurtured within one's social context and interpersonal relationships.

Three important social resources for Korean immigrants are the absorbing society, the ethnic faith community, and the family. In these communities, they have both positive and negative experiences which either promote or impair resilience. Nurturing

resilience, therefore, involves building up these communities to provide continuous encouragement and support.

The family is the most basic and essential human community, and for the majority of people, it is the primary context in which resilience is nurtured. Froma Walsh articulates three key processes of resilient families, and they include belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication/ problem-solving processes. Regarding these processes, Korean American families have areas that need improvement and adjustment. Culturally adequate family patterns and processes need to be developed and implemented. On the other hand, they also have many cultural and ethnic values that can be further promoted. It is important to search for and strengthen these inherent resources so that they will effectively employ these resources in the face of multiple conflicts and dilemmas.

What are Korean cultural values and traditions that determines family's appraisal of stress situation? What are the inherent assets and strengths of Korean families that must be identified and strengthened to nurture resilience? In chapter four, therefore, I turn to traditional Korean family values and structure and glean from them the sources of resilience.

Chapter 4

TRADITIONAL KOREAN FAMILY VALUES AND STRUCTURE

The concept of family resilience affirms that culture plays a significant role in coping process. However, some Korean Americans immigrants tend to hold negative views about Korean culture, believing that their conflicts in immigrant life are caused particularly by their unique culture. This assumption arises from the fact that there are many opposing elements among western and eastern cultures. In their effort to better assimilate into the dominant culture, they tend to overlook and discard Korean cultural heritage as a weakness and disadvantage. However, this heritage is still deeply imbedded in Korean families, and in it are both positive and negative dimensions. Therefore, I maintain that positive Korean cultural values must be identified as inherent strengths and also promoted in Korean American families to nurture resilience.

In this chapter, I will explore traditional Korean family structure and values based on Confucianism, and search for strengths within this structure. I will begin with looking at the background of the traditional family, which provides the cause for particular family structure. Then I will explore the Confucian principles within the family focusing on the patriarchal system and filial piety. Lastly, the life of women and their power within an oppressive, hierarchal system will be examined. A close examination of the traditional Korean family system is very appropriate for this project because Confucianism places a strong emphasis on the family.

Background of the Traditional Family

Traditional family structures and values in Korea did not emerge out of a vacuum, but were shaped under certain social and economic conditions; the two most significant conditions were agriculture and Confucianism. Since the agricultural pattern of life required the cooperation of the entire family and Confucianism considered family as the basic unit of society, ethical teachings and relationships within the family became the most essential dimension of life in traditional Korea.

Agriculture

Koreans formed an agricultural society from the early settlement period on the Korean peninsula and many characteristics of agricultural life shaped family life.¹ Agricultural society required the collaboration of all family members. Cultivating rice required enormous amount of labor which involved preserving and using water, transplanting rice seedlings and harvesting during a very limited time.² Because farming machines were not developed, it was impossible for one individual to cultivate rice alone. Since the family economy depended upon manpower within the family, Korean families tended to have many children. Women needed help in raising children since no childcare service was available. In the same vein, an individual could not exist alone, but only as a member of the family by participating in farming. Therefore, in this agricultural context, “the cooperation among all members was the basic condition of family life” and to maintain order within the family, the role as head of the family was highly important.³

¹ Taekil Kim, “Hankook Gajok-ui Gwaguh-wah Hyunjae Guhrigo Mi-rae” (The Past, Present, and Future of the Korean Family), *Chulhak-gwa Hyunsil* (Philosophy and Reality) 55 (winter 2002): 31.

² Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook Gajok-ui Sahoe Ilyuhak* (Social Anthropology of the Korean Family) (Seoul: Jipmoondang Publishing Co., 1998), 52.

³ Taekil Kim, 31.

Moreover, families needed to form a larger kinship society with other relatives, and they lent hands in farming.

The family was also very important in the traditional agricultural society since it was the basic economic unit. Because a market economy was not yet developed, the family produced, preserved, and also consumed their basic necessities of life. They also utilized their agricultural products to purchase food, fabric, or other items that they were unable to produce. In this sense, family was “the basic unit of production and consumption” as well as the very basis of human life.⁴

Confucianism

During the *Chosun* dynasty (A.D. 1600 to 1910), Confucianism was the basic ideology used to systematize the society and the principle to rule the country as well as the state religion.⁵ The focus of Confucianism was ethical life which distinguished human beings from animals.⁶ The ultimate goal of human beings was to live an ethical life which found its expression in five basic human relationships: between father and son, a king and his subjects, husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends.⁷

The major characteristic of these relationships is hierarchy (except between friends), and a clear distinction is made between sexes and ages.⁸ The presupposition is that men are higher than women and the old above the young; and the roles assigned to men, women, the old, and the young are distinctly different. Such Confucian ethics is

⁴ Kwangkyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” in *Confucianism and the Family*. ed. Walter H. Slote and George A. DeVos (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 251.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Sungkyunkwan College, *Yuhak Sasang* (Confucian Ideology) (Seoul: Sungkyunkwan College Publishing Co., 1996), 108.

⁷ Ibid., 109.

⁸ Dongchoon Kim, “Yugyo-wa Hankook-ui Gajokjooui” (Confucianism and Familism of Korea), *Kyungje-wa Sahoe* (Economy and Society) 55 (fall 2002): 102.

basic duty and order that must be maintained in human relationships. Under such order, human beings are to perform their functions. They must strive for hierarchical, yet interdependent relationships in which the low submits to the high while the high administers the low.

However, more important than the apparent hierarchy is the underlying principle. Confucian ethics is not to be achieved by external coercion; rather, it is voluntary action which arises from virtue, that is, human beings' natural temperament. In *the Analects*, Confucius defines virtue as "overcoming the ego and showing reverence and sincerity toward others."⁹ Mencius understands virtue as natural sympathies for others.¹⁰ In other words, it refers to an empathetic heart which does not seek one's own benefit but shares the pain and suffering of others. Wei-Ming Tu defines virtue as an inner principle which includes "benevolence, charity, humanity, love, goodness, human-heartedness."¹¹ Virtue is the root of Confucian ethics and values. It is love for other people, and it starts with people around them.

The external expression of virtue is propriety.¹² It involves the behavior of respect, humility, and concession, and it is an explicit means of building up a community. Confucianism perceives that people can learn propriety, particularly in the family. Hence, the family system is employed to attain the goal of social ethics and order.

Confucian Understanding of Human Being

The family system as the basis of social ethics becomes more comprehensible through examining Confucian anthropology. Confucianism understands human beings

⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 112.

from the perspective of nature or biology so that the family, not an individual, is the beginning point of the world. According to Confucian anthropology, an individual cannot exist apart from the family, and human nature has a deep relationship with the formation of the family. Jinuk Choi writes:

In Confucianism, human beings are not thrown into the world, but into the family, into the blood relation with their parents and siblings. The birth of a human being is always a birth into the family, and it is after he/she is born into and raised within the family that he/she can advance into the larger world. This is Confucian anthropology.¹³

The moment a baby is born through a sexual relationship between a man and a woman, “the two who gave birth to the baby automatically become the parents of the baby, and the new human life becomes the child of the man and woman.”¹⁴ That is to say, because humans are biological beings, they cannot exist in the world apart from the family. A human being is born as a child of his/her parents and as a brother or a sister of his/her siblings, is always in relation to them. This notion further point to the origin of one’s being. An individual does not exist before the family, but family exists before the individual; “my family or my ancestors are truly the origin of my existence.”¹⁵ For this reason, the family precedes any individual or community, and it is in the relationships within this context that individuals learn to become ethical beings.

Confucianism and Family

Confucianism plays a crucial role in shaping the family system, especially its patriarchal structure. Many practices and patterns of action within the family are deeply

¹³ Jinduk Choi, “Gajok, Gabujang-juk Gajok, guhrigo Yuhak” (Family, Patriarchal Family, and Confucianism), *Chulhak-gwa Hyunsil* (Philosophy and Reality) 55 (winter 2002): 43.

¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

rooted in Confucian ethics, and by closely examining these practices I draw out assets from these ethics for Korean immigrant families.

Family, the Center of Confucian Ethics

Confucian ideology provides practical ethics for the family through the basic structure of relationships. The family is to strive to maintain balance through ethical principles which clarifies the order and functions of men, women, the old, and the young. The order between men and women applies primarily to the husband and wife. The husband rules while the wife submits to him, and the responsibilities and duties of the two are distinctly different. The ethics between the old and the young is sustained through children's reverence and obedience to their parents, known as filial piety, and also through parental care and the teaching of their children. Familial harmony and order, highly required for an agricultural society, do not come from mutual respect or rational negotiation of the members' rights and duties. Rather, it is sustained through the hierarchical relationship among the family members and the rigid distinction of their roles.

It was believed that the family needed strict order and sacrifice for the common good of the family. The family safeguards its members from danger: "Family is the most secure insurance plan which assures one's well-being and protection from crisis for one's entire life."¹⁶ Hence, in order to protect its members from outer danger and inner conflicts, and also to secure their lifelong well-being, the family demands the members' sacrifice. The family's benefit is prior to that of an individual so that the members must sacrifice themselves for the family's prosperity and continued existence. Individuals'

¹⁶ Boojin Park, "Moonhwajuk Byunhyukgi-ui Saeroun Gajok Paradigm" (New Family Paradigm in Cultural Reformation), *Chulhak-gwa Hyunsil* (Philosophy and Reality) 55 (winter 2002): 64.

success and promotion is strived not for one's own sake, but for the family because family is "a community of common destiny."¹⁷ In a model family, all members work together for the family's prosperity; parents sacrifice for the children and children for the parents, and each member for one another.

In this sense, Confucianism values human beings who firmly restrain the self in order to sustain the harmony within the community. Ethical humans are aware of their responsibilities for other people so that they practice these duties and further demand from others that they do the same. Their obligation for the family is prior to their own rights and benefits. Hierarchical relationships within the family are central because these hierarchical relationships are the ethical order sustaining the family. An individual's freedom, independence, and development are suppressed, whereas their sacrifice is demanded for the existence and well-being of the family.

However, the ultimate goal of Confucian ethics is not only for the family itself, but also for the stability of the larger society. The ethical life in the family is to be extended further into the society; "Confucianism is based on family ethics which is the most basic of human relationships, and it further includes ethics that can be applied to neighbors, society, and the nation."¹⁸ People are educated to practice familial propriety, and practical ethics of the society is patterned after that. For this reason, those who neglected familial propriety were ruled by the law. Virtue applies not only obedience to the hierarchical system within the family or clan, but also "participation in, cooperation with and communication with the local community."¹⁹ Mencius states this principle clearly; "If, by respecting the elders in my family, I can learn to respect other elders, and

¹⁷ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸ Dongchoon Kim, 93.

¹⁹ Sungkyunkwan College, *Yuhak Sasang* (Confucian Ideology), 110.

by loving my children, I can expand my love to other children; then to rule over the world becomes as easy as flipping my own hand.”²⁰ The ethical life in the family serves as the means to sustain ethics and order in the society as a whole.

The family and the state maintained a reciprocal relationship as they sanctioned each other. While Confucianism attempted to establish a political system based on familial order by considering the king as the parent of the people, it also tried to stabilize the family based on political order by likening the father to the king. The two systems mutually influenced and strengthened each other.

Patriarchy

The development of patriarchy becomes logical within the system of Confucian ethics. In order to maintain the family's inner bonding and sustainability, the family needs a centering force that unites family members as one, and the father takes up this role of the family's center. Although intimacy and love among the blood related members are the primary elements in the family, the family is not free from discord and conflicts. Instead of focusing on intimacy and love, Confucianism attempts to manage family discord by emphasizing an authoritative and hierarchical family system that centers on the father. Patriarchal family ethics is presented to attain continuation and inner bonding of the family, and also to prevent confusion and violence in the society of which the family is the basic unit. Since patriarchal family ethics include a discriminatory hierarchical order which causes oppression, one may object that hierarchy can disrupt intimacy and love among family members. Nevertheless, Confucianism demands the establishment of a strict hierarchical order as a means to rescue the family and society from discord and conflicts.

²⁰ Ibid.

Jinduk Choi maintains that Confucius had probably known that it was absolutely impossible for human beings to build a perfect community, full of love and peace. Confucianism's assumption was that even within a family, which is established based on a blood relationship, a community of love was an unreachable goal.²¹ Even in times of peace, a family or society can experience confrontation, discord, and disruption. Such social and familial disruption cannot be fixed by any ideological or systemic attempt, but the situation can be "prevented from getting worse" by employing and stabilizing it with a discriminatory hierarchical order centering on the father.²² According to Choi, imposing such discriminatory, oppressive, and patriarchal family ethics was believed to be a more pragmatic means of sparing the family and the society from deeper conflict.

The historical resource is also provided for the legitimacy of the formation of the patriarchy, although the arguments are not necessarily logical. In the agricultural society, physically strong men assumed most of manually tough tasks so that they gained leadership role. Also, during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Korea suffered invasions from China and Japan. In order to protect the nation and family from foreign invasion, Koreans needed order and a system that centered on physically strong men.²³ Hence, patriarchal order established and strengthened social, political, and economic systems. This patriarchy was accepted as the basic principle of order for the family and became internalized as a universal ideology.

The presupposition of the supremacy of the male is another reason for a patriarchal society. Taekil Kim claims that patriarchy is formed because "the ancestor

²¹ Jinduk Choi, 52.

²² Ibid., 55.

²³ Haein Park, "Hankook Gajok-ui Yuksajuk Byunchun" (Historical Changes of the Korean Family), in *Gajokhak* (Family Studies) (Seoul: Samsung Publishers, 1993), 104.

believed that blood ties are sustained only through the male. They were convinced that it was the father who begot children and the lineage of human being is spread only through males.”²⁴ The beginning point of human life is the family formed by the father, and the purpose of human life is preserving the family through a son. Therefore, the patriarchal system only acknowledges men as complete human individuals, and females are not equal to males.

For all these reasons, patriarchy is perceived to be the most effective structure for the well-being of the family and of the society. In order to enforce this structure, authority rests with the patriarch. The head of the family has absolute authority and rules all its members. Patriarchy has three major rights and obligations: “representing the family in society, supervising family members, and controlling family property.”²⁵ Firstly, the patriarch has authority to be the representative of the family to outsiders. He presents his opinion at a village gathering or clan meeting, and attends other families’ special occasions such as a wedding or funeral and makes monetary contributions.²⁶ He also welcomes visitors to the home. For this reason, he is called “*bagat-juin*” (Outside Master). His second obligation is supervising family members’ moral behavior so that he teaches and instructs their behaviors. The members must get permission from the head concerning weighty matters such as traveling, going to school, getting a job, marrying, moving out, and so on.²⁷ Lastly, the patriarch has rights over the family’s property. All

²⁴ Taekil Kim, 33.

²⁵ Kwangkyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” 252.

²⁶ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea) (Seoul: Koryo Publishing Co., 1984), 98.

²⁷ Ibid.

property including the house and land for farming are his possession, and he is in full charge of it as well as disposition.²⁸

The practice of household succession appears to be very inequitable, but it is also a logical system that seeks family stability. The position of patriarch and the rite of performing ancestor worship are exclusively inherited to the first-born son.²⁹ The inheritance of the property also involves a very “discriminatory succession of favoring the first born son.”³⁰ The first son marries and lives with parents, and other sons move out and form branch families upon marriage. Although the practice varies slightly depending on the locality, the father generally wills half of the farming land to the first son, and divides the other half equally among the remaining sons while daughters are completely excluded from inheritance.³¹ If there are only two sons, the first son gets two-thirds of the property. The first son inherits a large sum because he is responsible for caring for his parents, performing ancestor worship, and carrying out other tasks outside family in place of the father, as the new patriarch.

However, the authority of the patriarch is double-sided; it is coupled with responsibility. The rights over property are directly related to his responsibility of providing basic needs and security to the family. In order to fulfill this obligation, he must utilize the property wisely. Further, he has the authority and responsibility to will the property to his sons. A good patriarch always tries to give more property to his sons than he had inherited from his own father. The head is also responsible for ceremonial rituals, not only for his deceased parents, but also for his ancestors. In the same vein, he

²⁸ Ibid., 99.

²⁹ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook Gajok-ui Sahoe Ilyuhak* (Social Anthropology of Korean Family), 39.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 40.

is accountable for every member's moral life; misconduct of any family member brings shame and dishonor to the patriarch.

Although the patriarchal system brought stability to the family during *Chosun* dynasty, it also caused evil practices. By emphasizing the absolute power of the men, it entailed the oppression of women, demanding excessive obedience.³² Moreover, individuals were not allowed to express their will or opinion while being extremely oppressed.³³ Children were not treated as people. It was taken for granted that men enjoyed special privileges, and this notion produced abusive customs in the traditional family and society.

The patriarchy also brought pain to the patriarch himself. As the head of the family, he had to be very strict and fearsome, but at the same time, he was a lonely being.³⁴ In order to sustain his authority, the father behaved with dignity. He lived in his own room (*sa-rang-bang*, referring to guest room) of the house, distancing himself from the family, and he dined alone on a separate table during the meal time.³⁵ Other family members were not to act carelessly, but expressed respect in both words and behavior. The members exchanged very limited words with their father. He always had to be the strong one who did not fail his family so that he was not allowed to express his emotions or show a sign of weakness. In all circumstances, he had to keep his place as the patriarch. He was respected, but felt burdensome and lonely.

³² Taekil Kim, 44.

³³ Boojin Park, 62.

³⁴ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook Gajok-ui Sahoe Ilyuhak* (Social Anthropology of Korean Family), 42.

³⁵ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies* (Seoul: Jipmoondang Publishing Co., 1997) 132; Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 99.

Filial Piety

Filial piety is the most essential principle for life in the family, and it is also the basis of virtue, or the significant human ethics. Its detailed prescription demands a very rigid practice, yet the foundation of filial deeds originates from a deep sense of reverence. The goal of filial piety is not merely parental comfort, but more to educate individuals about the proper relationship through which they express their honor and reverence for others in a very specific and particular manner.

Filial piety is not a reciprocal relationship between parents and children, but unilateral and absolute obedience of the children to the parents. It is the obligation of the children to repay the love of parents. To violate this principle is not simply an ethical problem, but also a legal issue. It was highly reinforced by the society and fulfilling it became “the ultimate life-goal for a person, regardless of sex or status.”³⁶

Filial piety is serving the parents through utmost reverence and gratitude by not causing anxiety or hurting their body or mind, but bringing peace in their heart and obeying them in all things. The reason for filial piety is the unlimited grace of parents. Parents give life to children, raise, educate, and support them. When the children are grown up, they give financial assistance for the newly married family through inheritance. “Parental benevolences are deeper than any sea and higher than any mountain” so that there is no limit to fulfilling filial obligation.³⁷ Confucianism also commands that the children are obligated to show filial piety even when the parents are not loving or

³⁶ Haejoang Cho, “Male Dominance and Mother Power: The Two Sides of Confucian Patriarchy in Korea,” in *Confucianism and the Family*, ed. Walter H. Slote and George A. DeVos (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998) 196.

³⁷ Kwangkyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” 251.

merciful.³⁸ Regardless parents' qualification, it is the duty of the children. In every possible way, the children are required to please their parents.

The details of filial piety have been articulated. Based on main Confucian writings that were used in various traditional learning centers, Jeiseuk Choi spells out the specific content of filial piety. Direct admonitions for filial piety include submitting blindly to their authority, attending to parental needs, supporting them economically, comforting and pleasing them, and performing "a solemn funeral ceremony."³⁹ Indirect admonitions demand; "Do not exhibit your extraordinary feeling of love to your wife; have a heir, the successor of your family; keep loyalty to your king; get along well with your friends; do your very best in your official work." Other proper conduct are also ways to practice filial piety and these involve abstaining from idleness; refraining from drinking, gambling, and quarrels; and avoiding extreme entertainments or decoration of their house.⁴⁰ They must follow every prescription.

However, a strict and detailed prescription of filial deeds must arise from a sense of reverence; sincere respect from the heart is more important than providing abundant material goods.⁴¹ The children can make their parents happy by providing a nice dwelling place, good clothes, and tasty food. No matter how well the children serve their parents with external formality, however, if they do not truly respect the parents deep in their hearts, it cannot be counted as genuine. The inner reverence must be expressed in behavior through courteousness and obedience. In order not to cause anxiety in their parents, children must always stay near parents, notify them in case of absence, pay

³⁸ Jinduk Choi, 50.

³⁹ Jaiseuk Choi, "Traditional Values in Korean Family," *Journal of Asiatic Studies* 7 (1964): 44.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 44-45.

⁴¹ Sungkyunkwan College, *Yuhak Sasang* (Confucian Ideology), 113.

respect when leaving and coming back home, and must be back on planned time. When the parents call them, they must immediately stop whatever they were doing and report to the parents.

Making parents happy and peaceful is also important. They should bring good food and nice clothes to their parents in order to please them. Another way to bring peace is for the children to treasure their own bodies. Because their body is a gift from the parents, they must keep it clean and in good condition.⁴² In this sense, purposeful puncturing of a body part, such as piercing or tattooing, is also prohibited. Not to cause worries in parents, the children are to avoid dangerous places such as high, deep, and dark areas, and they are not to engage in hazardous activities. Children's health is a joy to parents, and their illness is a worry for parents.

Filial piety does not end when parents die; it must be continued even after their death. The children are to perform the ritual service of the ancestors with the same attitude of serving living parents. Although some poor children do not have enough to offer a bowl of warm rice to the parents while they are alive, the children can fulfill filial piety even after their death. This can be done through observing faithfully the ancestor worship rituals and by bringing honor to the family through success.⁴³ Confucius claims that, "While the parents are alive, serving them is your propriety; when they are dead, funeral ritual is your propriety; and from then on, ancestral ceremonies are your propriety."⁴⁴ The ritual includes both their immediate parents and their prior ancestors (up to great-great-grandparents), and the practice of ancestor worship is a continuous expression of filial piety.

⁴² Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 108.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴⁴ Sungkyunkwan College, *Yuhak Sasang* (Confucian Ideology), 112.

Filial piety is not limited to the children's relationship to their parents within the family, but extends further to the society and the state. It involves "becoming an honorable man" who is loyal to the state because it brings honor to the family.⁴⁵ In the narrow sense, filial piety is respecting and obeying the parents; but it grows into virtue and goodwill since no filial children harm other elderly people or intentionally cause disorder in the society. Filial piety is the absolute and the most ultimate deed of human beings, and it is the basis of all social ethics. Therefore, when everyone is filial, first the family is in peace, and then the world is in order.

Ancestral Rituals

The practice of ancestral rituals has been often neglected and discarded by Christians as a pagan custom. However, the underlying principles reveal deeper fundamental values, and these need to be identified and reclaimed as assets for Koreans. Ancestral rituals had two significant functions in the family: a way to practice filial piety and a means of education for proper life. As mentioned earlier, by faithfully observing the ritual services of the ancestors, one fulfills his filial piety for the deceased parents. This filial piety is further extended to reciprocal relationships with his ancestors. As the descendents commemorate the deceased ancestors, the latter, in return, are to protect the former. This practice was based on "a belief in ancestor spirits who protected their offspring, rewarding them for the proper performance of the services. In effect, ancestors became family gods who assured the prosperity and continuity of the family."⁴⁶ The ancestral ceremony maintained the connection between the ancestors and the offspring; it

⁴⁵ Kwangkyu Lee, "Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family," 251.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 253.

functioned as sustainer of a family's lineage as each member found his or her identity through commemorating the ancestors.

Moreover, by following the exact procedures as defined in the book *Four Rites*, the family members learn the proper way of conducting the rites. Among the four rites of initiations, marriages, funerals, and ancestral ceremonies, the last was considered the most important. It involved many details:

One had to perform three different kinds of ancestral ritual- one on commemoration day, another on holidays, and a third in front of the ancestors' graves once a year. Ritual procedure was precisely specified; for example there was a fixed order for different dishes on the table, food was presented in a fixed place, and one was supposed to perform the rites at a fixed time and in the proper manner as set forth by the ritual book.⁴⁷

The proper performance of the rites was a way of social education because people learned to behave in the larger society "initially by performing family rituals in a *proper* way."⁴⁸ It was believed that proper way of performing rituals became the basis of proper manner for all other behavior in the society.

Extended Family

The concept of the extended family discloses the nature of connectedness and mutual dependence in the traditional Korean family. The term is often misunderstood as one large family living under one roof, but it is generally composed of one main family and several branch families that live in separate houses. The main family is continued by the first-born son who lives with and takes care of the older parents. The second and younger sons form branch families (nuclear in its form) after their marriage by moving out of their parents' house, but are close enough for a continued relationship. Kwangkyu Lee explains this connection; "The branch family has an independent household and is

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 250 (*italics in original*).

economically and socially independent of the main family, but it is connected to the family through the ritual service of the ancestors, which makes for a form of moral dependency.”⁴⁹ They gather for the ancestral ceremony and pay their respects.

Living within a small village, they also cooperate in farming and child rearing. In case of big family affairs such as a marriage or funeral, the villagers came together to help one another. In this sense, the whole village often functioned as an extended family. The elders of the village were parents to all children as they were expected to supervise moral and ethical behavior of the young.⁵⁰ By maintaining a strong relationship, the main family and the branch family established an extended family.

The concept of the family is also extended to ancestors. Through ancestral rituals, the members identify themselves with the ancestors of the family who are still connected to them. Therefore, when they speak of “family,” it includes the dead as well as the living.⁵¹

Women in the Confucian Family

Although their lives were restricted in many ways in the traditional Korean family, women attained power and displayed resilience. The strong patriarchal family system created a clear distinction between men and women: both the status and the role. Women’s status was below men so that they experienced systemized oppression. Their roles were clearly prescribed and confined within the family; however ironically, these roles became a source of power within patriarchal system.

⁴⁹ Kwangkyu Lee, “Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family,” 253.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 254.

⁵¹ Jinduk Choi, 47.

Women's Status

In the hierarchical structure of patriarchy, women's place is lower than men, subject to blind obedience. The most representative notion concerning this relationship is known as *namjon-yobi* (honored men, abased women). The Confucian writings describe "women as the earth who must follow men. Men are the heavens, high and destined to lead. Heaven is strong with the principle of 'one' while the earth is low and soft with the principles of 'many.'" ⁵² Women are required to serve men and the family with sacrificial love.

Women became dehumanized and their life is severely restricted within the patriarchal system. Their main responsibility is maintaining the lineage of the husband's family so that she leaves her natal family upon marriage and becomes an "obedient slave" of the husband. ⁵³ Because she bears sons of the husband's family, she is completely excluded from her natal family that regards her as a "*chulga-wein*," meaning "a married daughter is no better than a stranger." ⁵⁴ Confucian ethics teaches *samjong-jito* to a woman. She is to obey three men in her life; "her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after the death of her husband." ⁵⁵ *Chilgo-jiak* defines the seven causes that can lead to expulsion of a woman from her husband's house. ⁵⁶ Also, a woman is forced to keep her virginity. A widow must not to remarry, but must remain chaste for her deceased husband for the rest of her life. A woman is defined as a person who cannot live as an independent being.

⁵² Cho, 192.

⁵³ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 50.

⁵⁴ Cho, 196.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 51. The seven causes were "a lack of filial piety, barrenness, immorality, stealing, talking too much, disease, and jealousy."

While women as daughters have no social rights or status, they can work their way to it through marriage and bearing a son. Their past life or background has no significance in the new life at *sijip* (in-laws' family or house, referring to the husband's family).⁵⁷ They have to work hard as a wife, daughter-in-law, and mother, enduring all the hardships. Most of all, it is through giving birth to a son that she attains her status; "Women, through their maternal identity and role, could receive considerable respect not only in the family but also in the society."⁵⁸ As she successfully continues the lineage of her husband's family through a son, she becomes a person of social status. In other words, without her relation with men, her husband and son, she cannot be a social being. In this sense, women's status is "achieved" rather than prescribed.⁵⁹

Women's Roles

Women's roles in Confucian society also reveal their significant contribution to and place within the family. Among several roles of women, housewife and mother are key roles and these brought them substantial power within the patriarchy as practiced in Korea.

The division of roles between men and women in Korea was very explicit. While men were responsible for protecting the family from external danger and carrying out physically demanding tasks, a women's role was strictly involved in housework. The husband had a nominal responsibility regarding housework while the wife was not to interfere with the husband's public domain. Such relationship is called "*namnyo-yubyol*" (sex-difference) or division of labor between men and women.⁶⁰ Although husband and

⁵⁷ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 112.

⁵⁸ Cho, 192.

⁵⁹ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 112.

⁶⁰ Cho, 192.

wife had an intimate relationship, they were cautious and courteous to each other. A housewife sustained the family along with the head of the family, but because a man was the social and economic center, she followed the order of “*namjon-yobi*.” Some argue that the intention of *namjon-yobi* ideology was not so much to discriminate women from men, but to clarify and promote their designated roles.⁶¹

The role of housewife assigned women a significant place in the family. When a daughter-in-law had borne children and became experienced in housework (generally after 7-8 years), the mother-in-law entrusted the daughter-in-law with the task and she withdrew from the work.⁶² *Jubu* (housewife) referred to a woman who has “inherited the task of housekeeping” from the mother-in-law, a woman who manages housekeeping, or the wife of the patriarch.⁶³ *Jubu* literally meant the lady master, a title that signifies both her role and authority as “the undisputed head of the home.”⁶⁴ *Jubu* was usually responsible for preparing clothes and food as well as maintaining the house. She helped men with the farming, made or repaired clothes, washed laundry, prepared meals, cleaned the house, and raised the children. Although her work was extremely toilsome, she felt meaningful and fulfilled, and at the same time, became a substantial center of the family.

In achieving the family’s order and prosperity, the role of the housewife was as important as that of the patriarch. She greatly contributed to farming since the head could not do farming without the cooperation of the housewife. While he planned for farming; the housewife worked out the details of gathering helpers and preparing food for them.⁶⁵ In a small family in which all members have to take a part in farming, it was often hard to

⁶¹ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 133.

⁶² Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 114.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 59.

⁶⁵ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 115.

clearly distinguish the role of the head and of the housewife. The housewife had the authority to command other female members of the family to get their work done. She could have assigned jobs to and managed the lives of female members. She also was in control of the consumption and the allocation of resources within the family. This housekeeping task was directly related to the patriarch's property and wealth. By being frugal and using wisely her rights to consume goods in storage, she could have greatly contributed to the family's financial status. Lastly, in order to prepare for potential emergency, she saved property in secrecy.⁶⁶ For these reasons, the patriarch consulted with and depends upon the housewife in certain matters.

The assignment of space in the house signified the role distinction between the patriarch and the housewife. The husband, usually called *bagat-juin*, or "outside master," resided in the "outside" building located near the gate, while the housewife called *an-juin*, or "inside master," stayed in the "inside" building.⁶⁷ The inner room where she lived was the center of family life, and this symbolized that she was the heart around which the family members gathered together. In the inner room stayed the gods who protected the family and kept safe important household goods. Also, the family gathered, rested, had meals in the room, and the head recuperated there when he was sick.⁶⁸

Women's Power

Within such extremely oppressive patriarchal system, however, many scholars propagate that Korean women in traditional society were rather powerful and liberated. Haejoang Cho joins them by illuminating several significant aspects of "mother power" evident within Confucianism during the Yi dynasty. First of all, familism promoted

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Kwangkyu Lee, "Confucian Tradition in the Contemporary Korean Family," 252.

⁶⁸ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 60.

women's rights. While Confucianism emphasized "family-centered social order," it defined women's role strictly within the domestic domain, thus strengthening the informal power of women.⁶⁹ Cho notes that "women's status is higher in those societies where in the evaluation of status the family plays an important social function, that is, where the domestic realm itself becomes a locus of social, economic, and political power."⁷⁰ This was the case of *Chosun* women. Secondly, the practice of filial piety displays the respect women received. Although women in general were degraded in the society, mothers were respected because "filial piety extended to both sexes nondiscriminatingly."⁷¹ Thirdly, the yin and yang principle offered a positive view on women's existence by affirming the balance between men and women. This concept focuses on the interaction of two elements, man and woman, so that "interdependence between the sexes and women's complementary roles were highly idealized."⁷² Beside ideological dimensions of Confucianism, Cho also articulates strict sex-role prescription and social acknowledgment of women's contributions to the family as other evidences of *Chosun* women's power.

The peculiar pattern of women's life in patriarchal structure also created a unique strength in women themselves. A man was born into and lived in one family all his life, and even after death, he continued to be the ancestor of that same family. On the other hand, a woman left her natal family and married into a new one.⁷³ In the new family, she experienced a sense of estrangement since no one was on her side or protected her. All the in-laws were generally very harsh toward her and expected absolute obedience and

⁶⁹ Cho, 192.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 188.

⁷¹ Ibid., 193.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Haein Park, 107.

sacrifice. The life at *sijip* (in-laws' house) was so miserable, especially during the first few years, that an old proverb instructed women to be a "mute for three years, deaf for three years, and blind for three years." She was to endure the test period without any objection or complaint. However, as she went through the diverse roles of daughter-in-law, housewife, mother, and mother-in-law in a new and cruel circumstance, she gradually became emotionally strong and independent.⁷⁴ Her adaptation ability became stronger than that of a man.⁷⁵ She did not only learn to survive at *sijip*, but also established her status by her hard work. Despite the oppressive patriarchal system, a woman built her own inner citadel; she was resilient.

The concept of "uterine family" is also helpful in understanding the concealed power of women in Confucian society. In the beginning of her marriage life, she had to obey and sacrifice for her in-laws. However, if she successfully overcame the hardships during the initial stage, she established her uterine family which became the basis of her authority. M. Wolf coins the term "uterine family"; "as the number of her children increases, she gradually constructs her authority in the in-laws' house."⁷⁶ The uterine family included her children and her daughters-in-law, and they showed love and care for the mother. Through her womb family, she attained a sense of achievement and compensation for all her efforts in her later years. Further, as a mother she was included in the ancestors who were due for veneration. Because of the possibility for such remuneration, she could endure the hardships and oppression of in-laws.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 116.

⁷⁵ See *ibid.* In patriarchy, men are generally strong within the system, but they become easily weak when they confront a harsh condition, especially outside the systemic device. Conversely, women have the courage to overcome hardships.

⁷⁶ Haein Park, 106.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.* In this sense, Park claims, male-preference ideology can be seen as a product of the uterine family. Because only sons can promise women's happiness and well-being, they must have a son;

Kwangkyu Lee highlights women's meaningful contribution in the family and the reward for their sacrificial work. The housewife, often addressed as "*anbang-manim*" (honorable lady of the inner room), manages all household matters. Although she is burdened with heavy loads of housework, as the manager of the household, she willingly "sacrifice herself for the family with inner pride."⁷⁸ Her stable and frugal work provides "the psychological security for the husband, who can concentrate on activities outside of the family."⁷⁹ Her role as a mother is even more crucial. While the father provides "social security" to the family by protecting it and supervising its members, the mother supplies "emotional security."⁸⁰ In their relationship with the children, the father is usually strict and firm in order to maintain his dignity as the head. The mother, on the other side, has intimate contact with the children and acts as "a mediator" between the father and the children.⁸¹ These distinctive roles of each parent as the provider of social security and emotional security create a harmony within the family structure. To obtain family stability and cohesion, mothers are willing to sacrifice themselves, and their dedication is not wasted since the children have "loyalty and affection" toward their mother, which is much more intense and longer in duration compared to deference paid to the father.⁸² Lee concludes that women were not merely slaves in the traditional family, but their motherhood was highly honored and their emotional security sustained the family in harmony with father's social security.

without sons, they have no promise for the future. This circumstance probably influenced women to treasure and value sons more dearly over daughters.

⁷⁸ Kwangkyu Lee, *Korean Family and Kinship: Korean Studies*, 62.

⁷⁹ Ibid.; See also Kwangkyu Lee, *Hankook-ui Gajok Jaedo* (Family System of Korea), 106. The husband displayed respect for his wife by using honorific language.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

⁸² Ibid., 67.

Conclusion

The very rigid Confucian family values of Korea have been the target of criticism. Perceiving them as a weakness, Korean Americans try to discard their long-valued heritage. It is necessary to adjust the family structure and practices in today's drastically changing society, but it is also important to note certain basic principles that have a lasting value. I maintain that many strengths and assets are found within Confucian family values, and they can be used to promote resilience in Korean American families.

The structure of the traditional Korean family was shaped by the agricultural context and Confucian principles that sought order and stability. The demanding work on the farm required efficient cooperation and stability among family members, while Confucius sought to establish order and peace in the society based on an ethical life in the family. Patriarchy was the structure chosen for this goal. Hence, the family functioned by centering on the patriarch, and the hierarchical relationship between men and women, the old and young was reinforced. The hierarchy brought stability and order in the family and society, but also created many evil practices, especially against the subjugated members: women and the young. They were required to obey blindly and sacrifice completely for the prosperity of the family.

However, without throwing out the bathwater with the baby, I will draw out some strength of the Korean traditional family structure and values. First of all, the Confucian concept of *family as the basis of human life* is significant in today's individualistic society as well as to this research. An individual is born into a parent-child relationship so that his/her existence cannot be imagined apart from the family. Because it is the

primary context of the individual, the life in the family most powerfully determines his/her being for better or worse.

This notion illuminates the significance of family in an immigrant context. The reality of immigrant families' cultural conflicts and struggles has weakened the role of the family, while no other social units can replace this crucial function, especially for immigrants who live highly restricted life. Korean immigrants are still highly attached to the family so that they are strongly influenced by it. For this reason, the Korean American church must focus on family education. The families must be strengthened to be a context where protection, nurturance, and encouragement are provided to sustain individuals.

The Confucian family displayed a *collective effort to seek the common goal* of the family's well-being. By focusing on the shared destiny of the family, all members took upon their responsibilities and obligations. Although the patriarch's power was absolute, it was bestowed upon him not to exploit the members, but to manage them and to bring order and stability to the family. Sacrificial love and obedience were the contributions from women and the young. The collective effort among all members for the common goal of sustainability and prosperity held the family together.

A common goal unites family members as one, and the acculturation process is the common stress of immigrant families which the members need to go through together. A collaborative effort is needed to overcome this hardship. Rather than blaming one another or excessively asserting one's rights and privileges, each family member needs to focus on his or her responsibilities and to work collectively.

Related to the collaboration is the *strong mutual dependency* evident within family and extended family relationships. The parents raise the young children, and the adult children take care of the aged parents. The offspring commemorate the deceased ancestors through rituals, and the ancestors are to protect their offspring in return. While the husband (or father) safeguards the family by providing social security, the wife (or mother) supplies emotional security. The main and branch families lived in proximity, depending upon one another for emotional, moral, and material support. Rather than striving to live a completely independent life, they acknowledge their shortcomings so that they openly asked for help when needed.

Although the roles may not be the same, the family members still need mutual dependence to live as immigrants. The first generation of Korean immigrants needs the second generation's knowledge and experience of the new culture, whereas the latter needs the wisdom and tradition of the former to sustain their ethnic identity. Immigrant families need to form a web of relationships with other families to provide support to one another as well as to promote the ability to ask for help when needed. Hardships and major events of life confronted together can become much lighter on their shoulders.

Confucian ethics highlight *love, humanity, piety, honor, goodness, and benevolence as virtue, and propriety as its expression*. Proper behavior in relationships is important, and it must be learned at home. However, although Confucian patterns of action appear to emphasize formality, the basis of outward propriety is the inner principles. All outer patterns of action including filial deeds must arise voluntarily from one's sincere benevolence and love for others.

The Confucian virtue points out fundamental principles for personal relationship, both within and outside the family. In a society that esteems capitalism and materialism, achievement and success of self becomes the most important goal of life, especially for ethnic minorities. To attain economic stability, Korean immigrant parents overwork so that familial relationships are neglected both in quality and quantity. For social upward mobility, parents excessively impose upon their children to excel academically. However, more important is the relatedness to people and it includes both the inner state of mind and outer deeds. Korean Americans need to focus more on people than material and show respect for people, both family members and others.

In the same vein, *Confucian ethics draws our attention to the society*. Its focus on the family is not for exclusive familism, but for the construction of a better world. The ethical life in the family is to be the foundation of ethical life in the larger society. Filial piety practiced at home extends to the elderly in the society.

Immigrant families often lose the sight of the larger world because of their intense struggle for survival. Moreover, participation in the society is difficult as they deal with cultural and language barriers as well as racial discrimination. Yet, family has to be a place that links individuals to the society as well as instructs and shapes individuals to build up and care for the world. The family and the society maintain a reciprocal relationship in which the former reforms and builds up the latter while the latter provides a just social system.

In spite of their extremely harsh life, *women's ardent work and devotion demonstrates resilience*. They lived under continuous hardships within a patriarchal social structure, but they turned their adversity into strength. By fully committing

themselves as housewife and mother, they gained respect and love from their children. With their strong adaptation ability, they complemented men's weaknesses and became the active sustainers of the family system. By playing a complementary role to create harmony and prosperity in the family, they teach how to live together in a community.

Traditional Korean women become a model for oppressed immigrants. They challenge not only women but immigrant families in general to see the present situation with a new perspective. Immigrant context is not simply oppressive and discriminatory, but holds possibilities within. With a strong determination and fortitude, their hardships and painful experiences can be turned into constructive opportunities. Living on the margins, they have critical eyes to see destructive dimensions of the society and power to bring changes. Korean families can demonstrate a true sense of resilience: overcoming their adversity and emerging stronger and more resourceful for themselves and also for the world.

The traditional Korean family structure and values have invaluable benefits. Yet, another crucial resource for the religious education model for Korean American families is the Christian faith tradition, and it can complement the weaknesses of Korean tradition that cause oppression. Family is also an essential dimension in a Christian understanding which can provide profound religious insights for family resilience. In the next chapter I examine a Christian view of family.

Chapter 5

CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDINGS OF FAMILY

Religious belief can be the most influential element that shapes the family schema, which in turn determines the worldview and the life the family lives. Especially in times of adversity, faith can help families to assess their crisis situation better, to make meaning out of it, to project a hope for the future, and eventually, to cope successfully. In promoting resilience in Korean immigrant families, Christian faith can be an essential strength and resource. The Christian understanding of family in particular offers a renewed view not only of the family, but also of the purpose of human life and God's ever present grace *in* and *for* the world. This renewed perspective of life also transforms the meaning of adversity. Therefore, families that are firmly grounded in Christian faith can become strong and resilient in times of crisis.

In addressing the Christian understandings of family, it is essential to consider several prevalent tendencies in the Korean American church regarding family ministry. First of all, there is a general insensitivity toward the issue of family ministry. Unless there is a major problem in the family, it is largely neglected in the church, and its significance rarely affirmed. Secondly, the lack of family ministry often creates ambivalence in parents. While family life and children are ignored, adult-centered worship and programs become the focus of the faith community. As a result, many church activities pull families apart, and in many cases adults end up having to make choices between the church and the family. This split creates a disconnection among family members and disintegrates the connection between family and faith. Moreover,

parents by and large perceive themselves as inadequate to be spiritual leaders for their children. Such a pervasive feeling comes mainly from the lack of knowledge and training. Assessing their spiritual life as deficient, and focusing on family problems rather than on strengths, makes parents live with guilt and incompetence. Although these issues may be common in all churches, they are more intense and apparent in the Korean American church.

Keeping these issues in mind, I present firstly, the biblical and theological understandings of family and secondly, the implications for Christian education in family and family spirituality. I begin with Bradley Wigger's exploration on the meaning of home and family life which broadens Christian perspective not only for family but also for the larger world. I also examine the concept of family as a "domestic church," a challenging but fundamental theme that enriches the meaning of the ordinariness of family life. Then, I move on to Horace Bushnell's classical work on Christian nurture, which articulates the significance of the family as the primary context of faith education. Lastly, Christian education in family and family spirituality are explored in order to cultivate spiritual discipline and practice through ordinary activities at home.

Biblical and Theological Understandings of Family

The biblical and theological concepts of family are drawn from Bradley Wigger's work and the notion of the family as a "domestic church." Although these two understandings have different starting points and languages, they both point to the same theme: sacredness of family life which is a visible sign of invisible work of God.

Meaning of Home and Family Life

A Presbyterian pastor and scholar Bradley Wigger's in-depth biblical and theological notion of family in his book, *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love and Care*, deserves primary attention. His approach to understanding the family is holistic in the sense that he presents a comprehensive view of Christian faith and its relation to family life. While broadening one's perspective to see the big picture, he also directs one's attention to the details of family life and home.

In learning and understanding any subject matter, Wigger maintains, the interplay between attention and meaning is the key. To know something in depth, it helps one to be a "connoisseur" who "appreciates the qualities that make this particular thing different from or similar to everything else."¹ A connoisseur's ability to attend to subtleties lies in knowing deeply the larger context and background. Because one knows so much about the subject in general, one is able to pay attention and detect the details. Exploring the background brings out the meaning for the details and parts.

It is the same with learning about faith and family. The meaning of the family and home provides energy and power to sustain mundane activities of home; without meaning, the details of family life become empty and futile. And vice versa, as one attends to details of family life, the subtleties become more meaningful. Hence, Wigger writes,

[W]hen our lives, including our families, homes, and children, are viewed against their larger, sacred context, these parts of our lives become more meaningful. And we could say that as the larger, sacred context is viewed in relation to the parts of our lives, faith itself becomes more meaningful.²

¹ Wigger, 5.

² Ibid., 8.

So, taking up the task of a Christian educational connoisseur himself, Wigger endeavors to portray the larger context of meaning of home and family life. He explores the meaning of home from the Bible. However, instead of drawing out passages which directly address or relate to the family, he traces the overarching theme from the larger context of the faith story, and then helps readers see the meaning of home and family within this context.

The significance of family and home is strongly affirmed through the plot of the Scripture, Wigger suggests, because the “connection between home and God is an old one and persists throughout the Bible.”³ The basic and repeated plot of the Bible is “Place-Displacement-Home.”⁴ The five detailed illustrations of the plot include creation-flood-Canaan, Canaan-slavery-kingdom, kingdom-exile-return, second temple-destruction-new creation, and the very life of Jesus-crucifixion-resurrection. Bringing out the plot while paying attention to the particular details and descriptions of each story, Wigger beautifully portrays the power of God at home.

It is to the work of God that Wigger points the readers’ attention in these stories. God is at work. God who created the human beings continuously relates to people, bringing them back to home, land, dwelling, and new creation. Moreover, even “God is at home among mortals.”⁵ The stories repeatedly reveal “God’s presence, God’s freedom, and God’s life-giving power” in human history.⁶

Once this larger background is explored, the meaning of home and family is transformed for Christians. Seeing family in relation to God, the meaning broadens “in

³ Ibid., 24.

⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁶ Ibid., 53.

the largest imaginable perspective.”⁷ Wigger expounds on the richness of the meaning of family and home:

Family is not just nuclear; home is not just property.

Family is so much more. Family expands to include the generations, reaching into the ancient past for roots. The Bible stretches our imaginations as far back as possible to include even the first couple. At the same time, the scriptures also reveal a passionate concern for future generations... Through children, the Bible reaches into the future for hope. In the process, our sense of who our brothers and sisters are expands as well. Our literal families become the foundation for our relationship to all of humanity...

Home is much more, too. The biblical sense of home reaches far into the past and way into the future. Home is homeland, a place to live, the place our ancestors lived, the promised land, the kingdom, the land for our descendants, the land flowing with milk and honey, even paradise... home is also freedom. Our sense of home stretches all the way back to Eden and creation. It reaches forward to the new Jerusalem and the new creation. Literal home becomes the foundation for our relationship to creation itself.⁸

For the faithful, the family is no longer confined to immediate blood-related members or home to the physical space where the family members reside. We are open to see much more than that.

The search for and discovering the meaning of home is important since it is directly related to faith. Or more, it is the faith; faith is a search for deeper meanings. It is exploring the deeper meanings of home and family life, and this broadened meaning expands one’s way of seeing “life in deeper ways.”⁹ It is seeing everything in relation to God and finding holiness and mysteries in the world. It is the power of “picking up God’s rhythms” and living along with that rhythm.¹⁰ The deeper meaning of home helps

⁷ Ibid., 59.

⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁹ Ibid., 128.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

one to see the ultimate power of God at work and further empowers one to live with “sources of courage that endure.”¹¹

It is this deeper meaning of home and life that provides direction and guidelines for family life as well as for family education. On the basis of one’s understanding of God’s movement, Wigger explores what should be learned at home through practice and discipline, to which I turn later.

Family as “Domestic Church”

Another important, yet conflictive and challenging theological concept of family is the “domestic church.” This theological piece is helpful because it articulates the nature and roles of family that are less evident in the Bible. However, the concept stirs much conflict due to its focus on the ideal form and missions of family.

The term is widely used in Catholic tradition, particularly after it was expressed in Vatican II, the 1980 Synod of Bishops, and Pope John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio* in 1981, and other various scholars’ exposition on the theme. However, it is rooted in the Bible and also in the long tradition of Christian faith. The Pauline Epistles identify particular households as a Christian community (Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:15-16). The theme is used by patristic figures such as John Chrysostom, Augustine, Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nazianzus as well as in Orthodox marriage liturgy and theology. Horace Bushnell and John Calvin also use “little church,” “church of the home,” and “church in miniature” in reference to home.¹² The term domestic church is, hence, not exclusive of Catholics, but applicable to all Christian traditions.

¹¹ Ibid., 95.

¹² Florence Caffrey Bourg, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 8-12.

Pope John Paul's *Familiaris Consortio* can be the basic framework for understanding the theology of domestic church. The Pope summarizes the fundamental values of family and the basis of this understanding is the theology of human beings; the creation of humans in the image of God and the call to live in that image. He states:

God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence *through love*, he called him at the same time *for love*. God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.¹³

The commentary on the apostolic exhortation by Richard Hogan and John LeVoir elucidates this theme of love very clearly:

God created man *through love* and *for love*. Love is the self-surrender of one person to another. When God created man and woman, He gave them being. However, since God is Being, in giving man and woman existence, God shared Himself (Being) with them. Therefore, when God created man and women, God loved them, i.e., He gave Himself (Being) to them. We are created *through love*. But we are also created *for love*. As an image of God, a human person is called to do what God does, to mirror and reflect God's acts. God loves, as He did in the creation and even more wondrously in the redemption. We, as His images, can do nothing less. If we fail to love in the way God loves, we fail to be true to our very selves, to our very nature given to us by God in His creative act.¹⁴

Human beings who are created in God's image, which is love, are also called to a relationship of love. Hence, love is the vocation assigned to human beings. It is in this call to love that the family must be understood.

John Paul then expounds a Christian understanding of marriage as a covenant, and this incorporates the theology of the body. Sexuality and procreation (exclusive to

¹³ Catholic Church, Pope, *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11 (italics in original). From here on, this work will be referred to as *Familiaris Consortio*. In the introduction, the Pope clarified the occasion for his writing. The bishops who had gathered and reflected upon family life in 1980 synod requested the Pope "to be a spokesman before humanity" on this matter.

¹⁴ Richard M. Hogan and John M LeVoir, *Covenant of Love: Pope John Paul II on Sexuality, Marriage, and Family in the Modern World* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985), 154-55 (italics in original).

spouses) are not something merely biological, but involves “the innermost being of the human person as such.”¹⁵ Marriage is a sign, or a symbol, of God’s covenant with Israel so that it is called “the conjugal covenant.”¹⁶ When a man and a woman enter into a union of love, they are imitating God; as God has given God’s self to human beings in creation, a man and his wife give themselves to one another. Therefore, such an act of love is “a physical manifestation of the divine love, they together are a physical sign of God’s communion with His people.”¹⁷ To reiterate, marriage of the believers is a sacrament because it is a reminder and witness of Jesus’ salvation.

John Paul declares that both the *identity* and the *mission* of family are found in the plan of God and the two are indistinguishable. Hence, he commands; “family, *become* what you *are*.”¹⁸ The identity of the family is “a community of life and love” so that its mission is “*to guard, reveal and communicate love*.”¹⁹ He is convinced that every task of the family is “an expression and concrete actuation” of that fundamental mission to love.²⁰

He further explores four tasks of the family: forming a community of persons, serving life, participating in the development of society, and sharing in the life and mission of the church. First, the communion between the husband and wife rooted in the “bonds of flesh and blood” is to be extended to the “bonds of the spirit” by including children, siblings, relatives, and members of other households.²¹ All members are called

¹⁵ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 12.

¹⁷ Hogan and LeVoir, 163.

¹⁸ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, no. 21.

to build this communion of persons through care, love, and mutual service based on the spirit of sacrifice.²²

The second task of family is to serve life through procreation and education. The fruit of conjugal love is children, and this means that the man and wife cooperate in God's creative act, "transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person." Parents are also called to be "the first and foremost educators" of children, and family is the first school of virtues in which the children are taught to love and revere God and others.²³ Living a simple and austere lifestyle, valuing persons over material, and engaging in self-giving service are some of essential values of life that need to be taught by example since "the communion and sharing that are part of everyday life in the home... are the most concrete and effective pedagogy."²⁴ Thirdly, the family participates in the development of society through its "free-giving" life pattern. As family members affirm the dignity of individuals without any condition, they set an example and motivation to the broader community to value all persons. Moreover, families must actively and responsibly engage in social service activities, practicing justice and hospitality.

The last obligation of the family is its ecclesial task to share in the life and mission of the Church. To be a "Church in miniature" means that family is "a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church," and it shares with the Church three fundamental tasks: the prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices of Jesus Christ. Domestic church functions, upon receiving the word proclaimed by the Church, as an

²² Sacrifice does not refer to selfless sacrifice in which one negates self and becomes subjugated to another. Rather, it is a voluntary action that is based on his/her strong self-affirmation. Knowing that human beings are created by God for love, one willingly serves others to fulfill God's intention.

²³ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 37.

evangelizing community by proclaiming the very word, first to their children and then to all people and families who do not yet believe. The priestly task involves offering themselves to God and to one another, and it is possible through “a life of prayer, through prayerful dialogue with the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit.”²⁵ As a king rules, Christians are called to rule with the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” or the commandment of love.²⁶ The first step is self-rule, governing their selfish desires, and then they govern the world by serving the world through respecting and working to restore the dignity of all persons.

The Pope’s address on domestic family is helpful in identifying God’s intention for human beings and the role family plays in relation to it. However, by presenting one particular form of a family and mandating rigid obligations, the exhortation raises a major tension between the ideal family and actual families that are full of flaws. When assessed in reference to the ideal family, one cannot deny that most families would fall short both of the prescribed structure and functions. Does this imply that only the perfect family is called to be a domestic church? What does one do with defects and imperfections of one’s family? What does it mean to be a domestic church in this inescapable deficient and inadequate reality of family?

Ordinariness and Sacredness of Family Life

The Family vs. Families

In this context of tension created by the concept of the ideal family, Julie Rubio, a theologian of Catholic tradition, presents the issues of “the family” versus “families” as

²⁵ Ibid., no. 59.

²⁶ Ibid., no. 63.

the pillar of her discourse.²⁷ Influenced by postmodernity and its focus on ambiguity and diversity, the concept of today's family has become very vague and indistinct, the moral principles obscure, and familial influence extremely weakened. The traditional and ideal concept of the family is replaced by the contemporary understandings of families.

Multiple forms of family not only exist but also new ways of family are being developed.

The debate between the family and families also extends to Christian theology. Liberal theologians reflect on the social reality of family diversity and emphasize "healthy processes or ways of functioning" over family forms or structures.²⁸ Instead of approaching families with judgmental eyes, families need to be valued, supported, and uplifted as they are. Conservative theologians reject such ambiguous definitions of family and argue that the family is "an institution whose form is given to human beings by God."²⁹ The traditional understanding of family is, the latter argues, the timeless truth that must be preserved and repeatedly pointed out to families in this time of ambiguity.

Rubio constructs an approach for today's family, especially for Catholic readers. The document of Pope John Paul II writes about "the family," the ideals to which Christians are called, while the U.S. Catholic bishops write "about and to families," in their effort to translate papal teaching for lay people in "Follow the Way of Love."³⁰ Rubio perceives the two groups not as opposing, but as complementing each other. The pope defines the ideal presented by God and also acknowledges the need for interpretation of it in the present context. The U.S. bishops engage in this latter task and help families to engage in reflecting on the truth for their concrete realities. Combining

²⁷ Julie Hanlon Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

these two visions is an approach of “listening to families; talking about ‘the family.’”³¹ It involves listening to diverse families and affirming them while also admonishing them to live more faithfully by pointing to the role model.

However, the model family’s exclusiveness still persists. Although the ideal functions to provide visions to guide families in their efforts to be faithful to God, it inevitably provokes guilty feelings in those that fail to meet the ideal. Families experience ambivalence due to the great disparity between the ideal and their actual family reality. This inability to match the ideal does not mean families should completely ignore the concept of the family as domestic church. The notion of sacrament of marriage and family’s identity and mission as revelation of God’s love are rich concepts that lead to the sacredness of family life.

Sacredness of Family Life

Struggling with the same issue, a Catholic theologian Florence Bourg shifts one’s attention to God’s ever-continuous presence in the midst of families’ weaknesses. She claims that it is the presence of God which makes the family sacred.

God works through all kinds of families: ideal and strong, but also frail and broken families. A case in point is the Holy Family of Jesus; “the family in which God chose to become incarnate was in many respects far from ideal, but nonetheless a true family in which God was surely present and at work, and which was clearly used as God’s instrument.”³² Bourg assures that the brokenness and frailty of actual families are meaningful because God is in the midst, revealing God’s grace.³³ For this reason, family

³¹ Ibid., 23.

³² Bourg, 61.

³³ See Jorge Maldonado, *Even in the Best of Families: The Family of Jesus and Other Biblical Families Like Ours* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994). Maldonado also demonstrates the diversity of

conflict is a dimension of family spirituality as much as family prayer is. The ways families deal with adversity can be seen as sacred because “God can be encountered *in* the failures of personal and family life.”³⁴ She quotes Wendy Wright on God’s grace upon family frailty; “Whatever the particulars of the formation, parenting [or, family life] breaks us open, cracks our smooth veneers and offers us the opportunity to grow. The direction of growth, if we let our lives become a prayer, is toward God.”³⁵ Brokenness is not only a part of the normality of family life, and it can also be turned into opportunities for growth in God.

This realization further points one’s attention to the ordinariness of family life. It is often argued that family life is “too mundane and secular to serve a purpose so grand and holy as manifesting Christ’s presence” and the context of family is where “we display our sinful side” rather than best.³⁶ However, the family is sacred the way it is and through it, Christ’s presence is revealed. In other words, family is not merely “*taking part*” or “*helping,*” but actually “manifests Christ’s presence.”³⁷ Family manifests Christ’s presence not through special activities, but by being what they are, a Christian family.

In order to explain the sacredness of ordinary and secular family life, Bourg uses Karl Rahner’s concept of sacrament. The prevalent theological tradition maintains that

families presented in the Bible. He chooses seven families which include a *nuclear* family of Jesus, an *extended* family of Jacob, an *incomplete* family of the prodigal son, another nuclear family in which a *woman* plays a leading role, a *one-generational* family of Mary and Martha, a *broken* family of the Samaritan woman, and the *family of faith* of Thomas. He describes the characteristics of each family, and identifies conflicts and issues that come naturally in the course of life or are sometimes aroused by human frailty and sinfulness. Regardless of the structures and problems each family has, Maldonado affirms that God works in all these families to bring reconciliation, renewal, growth, and transformation.

³⁴ Bourg, 62.

³⁵ Wendy Wright, “Living the Already But Not Yet: The Spiritual Life of the American Catholic Family,” Warren Lecture Series in Catholic Studies, no. 25, University of Tulsa, March 21, 1993, 7, cited in Bourg, 67.

³⁶ Bourg, 94.

³⁷ Ibid., 95.

God's grace is "an unmerited gift of God only if it becomes present and only where it becomes present in a secular and sinful world to which it is mostly denied."³⁸ This model perceives the Church as the sacred domain while portraying the world as unsacred. Rahner promotes the second model of grace which affirms the pervasiveness of grace in all things and everywhere; "This grace is made manifest and effective (though not always explicitly or consciously) in the concrete events of human history, wherever humans live in a manner that does not imply moral guilt."³⁹ Thus, everyday events in ordinary human life reveal God's grace whether people recognize it or not. Rahner calls this pervasiveness of sacredness in all things "the liturgy of the world." The distinction between the sacred and secular spheres is not necessary because God is present in all things of the world and all experience can be an instrument of grace. Therefore, the family is, like the Church, a sacrament.

Although he does not use the same terms, Bradley Wigger also articulates and redirects one's attention to the significance of ordinary activities in family life. The core of his thesis is the dynamics between the parts and the whole, the concrete and the symbolic. The larger background becomes "too heavenly" if one ignores the tangible and particular dimensions of one's earthly home. In the same way the meaning of home is enriched by the particular details of "place, land, home, dwelling, the temple, and the presence of God" in the biblical stories, the deeper meaning becomes concrete and visible in the details and parts of one's family life.⁴⁰ Hence, Wigger maintains, "we see the

³⁸ Ibid., 98.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Wigger, 39.

invisible at work in the visible.”⁴¹ Although family life is ordinary, one experiences the extraordinary and that is “the wonderful paradox” of family life.⁴²

The interplay between the extraordinary and the ordinary is Wigger’s way of describing the sacredness of family life. God’s mysterious and wonderful movement is revealed to Christians in home and family life so that the details of activities in the home are imbued with meanings. Because of the awareness of God’s relationship to humanity, one’s perception of ordinary details of family life is no longer plain and dull, but filled with mysteries and wonder. Through them, one encounters God’s grace and love concretized for the faithful. What one does in the home becomes ways of discovering and revealing God’s activity.⁴³ In this sense, family is sacred.

At this point, it is appropriate to shift the discourse on family theology to Christian education. Florence Bourg mentions the importance of speaking the mission of family in terms of religious education. Its future-oriented and eschatological perspective provides “motivation and direction to individuals and communities as they mature toward their potential.”⁴⁴ Reminding ourselves the goal of life as seeing holiness and wonder in life and revealing the love of Christ, then, what can one do to move toward this ideal? How can Christian education nurture families to meet this goal? What are the implications of the sacramentality of family for Christian education?

⁴¹ Ibid., 64.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ See Judith Kovacs, “Faith and Family in Biblical Perspective,” 22. Biblical scholars also perceive family as “a locus of revelation” and “earthly analogies of God’s love.” Family images are often used in the Bible to convey the human relationship to God. See M. Daniel Carroll R., “Family in the Prophetic Literature,” in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 117-18. Yahweh is envisioned as the *father* (Isa. 64:8) or *mother* (Isa. 46:3) and “Israel... as his *son*, or the people as his *children*, or Jerusalem as his *daughter*” (italics in original). See Clark, 11. The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is also referred to as the relationship between a husband and a wife. The famous analogy appears in Hosea, in which a faithful husband of Israel repeatedly retrieves his errant wife (Hosea 1-5). Hence, family images deepen one’s understanding of God.

⁴⁴ Bourg, 43.

Christian Education in the Family and Family Spirituality

Before exploring the educational and spiritual implications for family, I discuss the educational rationale for my emphasis on family. Above all other socialization groups, family is the most primary and natural place for any kind of teaching-learning experiences.

Family the Forming Center

The family as the most primary and important entity in the formation of persons has been acknowledged widely. Asian culture places a strong value on family and views the family-- not the individual-- as the basic social unit. Moreover, recent studies in psychology redefine the dimensions of human development and place an emphasis on the context of an individual.⁴⁵ While the classical formulations focus on autonomy and independence, the contemporary theories instead value interdependence. An individual is perceived as an interdependent self who is shaped by the contexts of family, gender, class, culture, and race; and among them “the most significant relationships are family relationships.”⁴⁶ In this sense, although the two perspectives differ on their definitions of maturity, they agree on one thing: the role of family in human development. Family members’ influence is the most powerful so that children’s experience in the family becomes the key in their formation, both of independence and interdependence. Basic trust, which is developed during infancy through the relationship with primary caretakers in the immediate environment, which is the family in most case, is a vital foundation to

⁴⁵ See Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*; Janice E. Hale-Benson, *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture and Learning Styles* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1982; reprint, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*.

⁴⁶ Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, “Overview: The Expanded Family Life Cycle: Individual, Family, and Social Perspectives,” in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*, ed. Betty Cater and Monica McGoldrick (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999) 5.

the development of independence. In the same manner, interdependence with people who are “different from ourselves” is most effectively fostered through “the cultural, socioeconomic, racial, and gender context of the family.”⁴⁷ Regardless of its form, the family has a tremendous impact upon shaping an individual. The role of the family becomes even more crucial in religious education due to the nature of faith.

The tradition of parental responsibility in embedding faith in children can be traced to the Bible, and this command explicates the role of home as the critical context of faith education. Deuteronomy captures this essence.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deut. 6:4-9, NRSV)

The passage articulates that home is “the most logical place for training in the Christian life,” where “intergenerational relationships are more spontaneous and significant, and the teaching opportunities are the most varied and rich.”⁴⁸ The goal of education is to love God, and parents take the major role of educators. The teaching methods involved are diverse: “repetition, object lesson, and the recounting of history.”⁴⁹ However, the heart of this teaching strategy points to *a way of life*. Since it is logically impossible to teach children to love God every minute of life at home, the intention is to live the word of God. Not only teaching it through words, but by demonstrating it through one’s life,

⁴⁷ Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick, “Self in Context: The Individual Life Cycle in Systemic Perspective,” in *The Expanded Family Life Cycle*, ed. Betty Carter and Monica McGoldrick (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999) 36.

⁴⁸ Edesio Sanchez, “Family in the Non-narrative Sections of the Pentateuch,” in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) 55-56.

⁴⁹ Clark, 9.

the parents train the children to live by faith. Therefore, family is “the seedbed” of faith life.⁵⁰

In her book on family spirituality, Marjorie J. Thompson identifies family as the forming center. She maintains that “those with whom we live and struggle and play most intimately have, it seems, the most enduring (even if unconscious) impact on our identity.”⁵¹ Whatever values or beliefs are emphasized at home, especially during early ages, become deeply ingrained and remain throughout one’s life. Whether intentional or unintentional, what parents convey through their words and actions influence children’s ways of perceiving themselves and the world, and also of relating to and living in the world.

Jeff Astley also highlights the role of family in the formation of faith. In his discussion, he draws from James Fowler’s work on faith development theory and claims:

Fowler’s view of faith is of a relationship both to the perceived conditions of our existence and to our companions-in-faith: we compose our image of our ultimate environment through our commitment to centres of value and power, and we do this ‘in interaction with communities of co-interpreters and co-committants.’⁵²

Especially during the early stages of faith (primal faith, intuitive-projective faith, and mythic-literal faith), the child develops a sense of identity and value system through symbols, sacraments, and stories experienced and told in family, one’s ultimate environment. A Christian family, therefore, is “an ecology of consciousness whose

⁵⁰ Sanchez, 56.

⁵¹ Thompson, 20.

⁵² Jeff Astley, “The Role of the Family in the Formation and Criticism of Faith,” in *The Family: In Theological Perspective*. ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 190.

principle of coherence and meaning centres on God as disclosed in Jesus Christ” and functions as the major contributor to the religious formation of children.⁵³

Organic Life in the Family

Yet, one of the strongest and early advocates for family education was Horace Bushnell, a pastor and theologian. He recognized family as the earliest and most essential place of faith formation because of the nature of family life as an “organic unity.”

Knowing the critical role of family life in shaping an individual, he maintained that the family can be a vehicle of both sin and grace. In the same way sin passed down from Adam to his offspring, depravity can naturally travel to the young, or vice versa, grace can be regenerated within. Rather than being an instrument of life, the family in those days functioned as an instrument of corruption under the influence of revivalism, he argued. Therefore, when his then notorious book *Christian Nurture* was published in 1860, it had caused a heated debate in the life of Christians during the mid nineteenth century.

As revivalism swept the nation, Bushnell was troubled with its main theological understandings: conversion and the total depravity of a human being. He criticized the movement of revivalism as “ostrich nurture,” the nature of unmotherhood, since it left the young unattended until they reached the proper age of conversion. Christian children were not formed or nurtured, but they waited and became Christians only by conversion, or “born-again” experience. The prevailing Calvinism on the total depravity of a human

⁵³ James W. Fowler, “Perspectives on the Family from the Standpoint of Faith Development Theory,” in *Christian Perspective on Faith Development*, ed. Jeff Astley and Leslie Francis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 320-26, cited in Astley, 190.

being convinced people to believe that the young were in the hands of the devil until they experienced conversion.

Although it was miscalled and misunderstood as Christian nurture, the contemporary education approach was “heartless and senseless” training which was virtually “no training at all.”⁵⁴ Children were left to themselves, in the hands of their mere instinct and perilous freedom “in this most tender and beautiful and pliant age, in a condition most of all unprivileged, and most sadly unhelpful.”⁵⁵ Parents’ wisdom, principles of virtue, joys and life in God, and faith that they have attained were not passed down to children. God gave the parents these benefits to transmit to their offspring, but by withholding them, the parents engaged in “nurture of despair”; bread of life left to be looked upon, but not to be tasted.

The counterpart to the ostrich nurture is, Bushnell contends, Christian nurture; “*That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise.*”⁵⁶ Instead of being left in the sand, un-nurtured and being allowed to wander away from God, and expected to be converted at a mature age, children are to grow up in Christian soil from the very beginning. For this reason, the family, not the church, is the core place of Christian education. That is to say, his focus is not Christian education within family, but Christian education in which the family becomes the primary context of education.

It must begin in the family, when children are very young. He claims that children are capable of cleaving unto “what is good and right,” and the Holy Spirit is also capable of working in them. He further defines Christian education:

⁵⁴ Bushnell, *Christian Nurture*, 67.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10 (italics in original).

And this is the very idea of Christian education, that it begins with nurture or cultivation. And the intention is that the Christian life and spirit of the parents, which are in and by the Spirit of God, shall flow into the mind of the child, to blend with his incipient and half-formed exercises; that they shall thus beget their own good within him- their thoughts, opinions, faith, and love, which are to become a little more, and yet a little more, his own separate exercise, but still the same in character.⁵⁷

The goal is to *train* and *discipline* the children in the right way so that they “may not depart from it” when they are old.⁵⁸

Bushnell’s conviction for Christian nurture *in the context of family* is conveyed through the concept of “the organic unity.” All members of a given community are closely related to one another, sharing a common source of life. Within this organic unity, all members are naturally shaped and nurtured by one another.

In the same vein, members of a family are directly shaped by the very spirit of the family. Parents have an influence on children not only through purposeful teaching or admonitions, but “the bond is so intimate that they do it unconsciously and undesignedly.”⁵⁹ As the odor of the house remains in garments and “as naturally as the air they breathe,” the atmosphere of the family permeates and shapes the members.⁶⁰ Even when children are too young to comprehend any language or intentions of parents, they are open to “*impressions*” which they perceive from everything they see. Bushnell writes:

Meantime, he is open to *impressions* from every thing he sees. His character is forming, under a principle, not of choice, but of nurture. The spirit of the house is breathed into his nature, day by day. The anger and gentleness, the fretfulness and patience- the appetites, passions, and manners- all the variant moods of feeling exhibited round him, pass into him as impressions, and become seeds of

⁵⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 94.

character in him; not because the parents will, but because it must be so, whether they will or not.⁶¹

The life of parents flows into the life of children. Therefore, parents are to educate children by model. Their intention is not the key, but their life is. The very life that parents live becomes the very means of education at home so that they must discipline themselves to *be* a person of faith. Without a continuous discipline, they cannot become persons whose actions, words, manners, and even moods will leave godly impressions on their children. In short, Christian nurture begins at home within the organic nature of the family, and parents' self-disciplined life is the very means of education.

Practice as a Way in the Christian Family

Because Christian faith can be best passed down within the organic unity of family and most effectively through a way of life, *practice* becomes the core method of Christian education in family. The term "practice" is an important one for Christian faith. It refers not only to specific activities but also to "doing things out of faith" which engages "a whole lifestyle."⁶² That is to say, practice is particular activities, but loaded with meaning that involves our way of being. Expressed differently, "*Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world.*"⁶³ Christian education at home, hence, engages in "rituals, disciplines, and practices that are explicitly religious."⁶⁴

In this sense, family spirituality becomes synonyms with Christian education at home. It involves intentional practice and discipline to nurture family members to

⁶¹ Ibid., 100 (italics in original).

⁶² Wigger, 132.

⁶³ Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith," in *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, ed. Dorothy C. Bass et al. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5 (italics in original).

⁶⁴ Wigger, 133.

recognize God's redeeming power and to reveal God's presence in the details of ordinary family life. It includes "cultivating the eyes to see abundance, to attend to mystery, and to perceive everlasting love."⁶⁵ It is promoting a way of life that responds to God's rhythm.

Christian educators and family spirituality writers alike seek to help families develop this way of life through their everyday tangible life events. Every activity, no matter how mundane it may be, can be an opportunity to encounter God, see the wonders of God's active presence, grow into God's love, and reflect that love for others.

Dolores Leckey, in *The Ordinary Way: A Family Spirituality*, recognizes God's grace present in various structures and types of family in modern society. Also noting the intertwined nature of Christian spirituality and community, she maintains that humans can grow "into the fullness of Christ" only in the context of community. Tracing Saint Benedict's vision of the households of God, she draws forth and names characteristics of community life that are appropriate for family life.

Marjorie Thompson points out the significance of family as the center of spiritual formation in *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation*. Because people are shaped by significant others and parents are one of the most influential ones to most human persons, she names family as the forming center. Whatever children experience in family during the early period of their life, it shapes their social, emotional, and spiritual being.

In *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life*, Wendy Wright maintains that Christian tradition of spirituality has been very exclusive of people who live an ordinary life. As a mother and a wife who is bound by family, she searches for a new approach to

⁶⁵ Ibid., 101.

spirituality that is consistent with the tradition but not limited by it. In addition to the traditional “journeying” image, she introduces a “dwelling” image, cultivating a settled space to experience the incarnate divinity of God.

Horace Bushnell and Bradley Wigger also make suggestions for traditions and rituals from Christian education perspective. Although learning takes place reciprocally between parents and children, parents must envision themselves as spiritual leaders and create a context for learning. Time that family members spend together, attention given to one another, and their ways of being family shape children. While keeping in mind the deeper meaning of faith, they must focus on the details of family life that nurture.

All these writers maintain that any dimension of family life can be opportunities to practice and nurture faith, and they identify various activities and qualities in detail. Some of the common themes mentioned are intimacy, equality, authority, prayer, hospitality, gestating, parenting, celebration, Christian commitment, and self-reflection. They describe what each means in relation to God and how to practice it in practical ways.

For example, parenting is a heavy responsibility of parents, but also a great opportunity to learn and grow in God. By accepting the responsibility, or by welcoming children, parents learn to commit and give themselves to children. It is being attentive to the needs of children all the time, and it also involves willingness of parents to have their life altered by unexpected events caused by children. The parents learn to embrace children and to be embraced by God. By letting go of children when they are grown-up, parents learn to love more deeply, placing the children in the hands of God who is the Parent.

Intimacy is being vulnerable and transparent enough to be touched by one another on the very intimate level of one's being. It is influencing and being influenced by one another through a close relationship. Knowing one another's uniqueness through conversation and time together is a way to practice intimacy. Family should be a place to exercise hospitality toward others who should be welcomed as if he/she were Christ. Moreover, the family is never to remain as an exclusive community that is concerned about itself only. It must be open to the larger community, the whole family of God, and care for all its members. All activities, times, and places in family must be cultivated as sacred in which one watches for, grows in, and participates in God's grace.

Relationship between the Family and the Church

Then, what is the relationship between the family and the church? Where does the church stand in this significant role of the family? The church and the family become inseparable as the meaning of family shifts in early Christian community, as described in the Epistles. The Greek words for "family" (*patria*) or "household" (*oikeios*) refer to "family of faith" or "household of God."⁶⁶ It is a new radical kind of family for Christians who take the teachings of Jesus seriously. They do not limit their responsibility to biological family, but extend their love and "embrace a larger family of all God's children."⁶⁷ Therefore, the members of the new family try to overcome hierarchical structure and perceive all as equals; "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"(Gal. 3:27-28). Their new concept of family enables them to change their

⁶⁶ Stanley E. Porter, "Family in the Epistles," in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*, ed. Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) 151-53.

⁶⁷ Rubio, 55.

extreme attachment to family and to live in a way in their Christian family-community, the church, referring one another as brothers and sisters, and God as the father.⁶⁸

Such close relationship between the family and the church is emphasized by religious educators. A Christian education scholar Craig Dykstra claims that the two are not completely separate entities. Defining family based on the “promise-making” nature, he sees “Christian people as participants simultaneously in the promise-making that constitutes church *and* in the promise-making that constitutes other covenantal relationships- including the family relationships.”⁶⁹ It’s not that one institution does something for the other, but both family and church mutually support and encourage one another in “partnership with God.”⁷⁰ Therefore, Christian education is “that particular task which we, in partnership with each other as the church, engage in to enable each other and the whole church to see, understand, and participate ever more deeply, widely, and powerfully in the redemptive activity of God.”⁷¹ Bradley Wigger points out that, during early Christianity, the boundaries between the family and the church were so fluid that they “affected each realm, transforming both.”⁷² Therefore, the goal of family

⁶⁸ See Cynthia Long Westfall, “Family in the Gospels and Acts,” in *Family in the Bible: Exploring Customs, Culture, and Context*; Judith Kovacs, “Faith and Family in Biblical Perspective”; Ray Anderson, “Brothers and Sisters, We Shall All Be There!” in *On Being Family: A Social Theology of the Family*, by Ray S. Anderson and Dennis B. Guernsey (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985). This concept of the new family of God reflects Jesus’ radical teachings on family (Matt. 8:21-22; Mark 3:31-35; Matt. 10:37; Matt. 10:34-36) and further leads to a tension between family and faith. Biblical scholars and theologians maintain that Jesus prioritizes the kingdom of God before anything, but without undermining family. He supports and strengthens family by valuing children, emphasizing the command to honor parents, sanctioning marriage, and promoting spousal faithfulness. See also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Christianity and the Making of the Modern Family* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). She traces the socio-historical and theological context of the New Testament period which not only created a profound tension between the family and the church, but also led to the development of celibacy as a higher form of Christian life over marriage.

⁶⁹ Craig Dykstra, “Family Promises: Faith and Families in the Context of the Church,” in *Faith and Families*, ed. Lindell Sawyers (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1986) 153-54.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 157-58.

⁷² Wigger, 119.

ministry is not to provide one-way, quick remedies to families' problems, but to sustain a "mutually beneficially relationship" with a broader perspective.⁷³

Other scholars perceive the church as the source of support and empowerment. Florence Bourg states that the family must join with the larger church through various rituals and educational activities in order to engage faithfully in nurturing a sacramental perspective.⁷⁴ Bushnell also claims that the family must be empowered by the Church.

Conclusion

The biblical and theological understandings of the family inform that family is more than what it appears to be. Bradley Wigger helps one to see beyond the tangible family life into the deeper meanings. The overarching plot of the Bible stories revolve around the theme of home and the details of these stories convey God's movement: God's love, God's redeeming power, and God's presence among people.

The larger meaning of home and family life broadens one's concept of the family. Moreover, it broadens one's perspectives for life and the world. This is faith- seeing deeper meaning, seeing everything in relation to God, seeing mysteries in all things. When one tries to live by this faith, one learns of the deeper meanings of family and is able to attend faithfully to subtleties and ordinariness, knowing the deeper meanings that underlie it.

The concept of family as domestic church lies in the notion of sacramentality of the family. Human beings are created *through* love *for* love so that they are called to do what God does: love. Marriage is the image and symbol of covenant which unites God and God's people so that it is called conjugal covenant. In the same manner, God's

⁷³ Ibid., 120.

⁷⁴ Bourg, 108.

essence, or God's love, is revealed in the family so that the family is considered a sacrament.

This sacramental role is to be practiced both inside and outside the family. Through care, acceptance, nurture, forgiveness, healing, and steadfastness practiced among family members, they experience the nature and presence of God. As the family reveals God's grace in its midst, this grace is made known to the larger world. The family is called to build up communions of persons through love and care, and serve life through procreation and education. Also, the family must develop society by setting up an example of free-giving law and actively engaging in the restoration of human dignity and justice. The family also shares in the life and mission of the Church by taking up the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of the Christ.

Although the concept of domestic church raises a major conflict due to its focus on an ideal form and functions of the family, it also illuminates the sacredness of family life. Florence Bourgeois affirms that despite their various structures and faltered realities which fall short of the ideal, families are called sacred. It is the very presence of God's grace that makes families sacred. From the concrete and ordinary details of life, one experiences the extraordinary and mysterious work of God. Therefore, in the midst of their ordinariness and weaknesses, families are sacred.

Christian education clarifies the role of family in faith formation. Family as the primary socialization context for an individual educates most effectively. Horace Bushnell articulates the nature of "the organic unity" of the family. Because the bond among family members is so intimate, the life of parents flows into the children regardless of their intention. Therefore, his idea of Christian education is "Christian

nurture” in which children grow up in Christian soil from the very beginning rather than being left unattended by “ostrich nurture.”

The nature of faith and that of family as an organic unity determine what Christian education looks like at home. The key is practice, and it refers to activities that engage a whole lifestyle. Through rituals and spiritual practices at home, family members nurture and cultivate a way of life that recognizes God’s presence. Through tangible activities, they encounter God and reveal God’s love to the world. They discipline themselves to love and grow more deeply into God’s grace.

An in-depth survey of the Christian understandings of the family is a major resource for Korean American families. The Christian concept of family illuminates its sacredness in its mundane and weak reality, including even the adversity families confront. What insights can the Christian concept of family bring to families struggling to overcome adversity? How does it strengthen Korean American families in the face of inevitable crisis called immigrant life? How does it nurture resilience in these families? What practices will embody this deeper understanding of family? I answer these questions in Chapter 6 by constructing a Christian education model for Korean American families.

Chapter 6

A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MODEL FOR KOREAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

Living as immigrants, Korean American families confront unique, multiple, and intense crises. Although their social and religious lives are highly centered on the Christian church, the church has been largely unresponsive to their struggles. As a Korean American Christian educator, I construct a Christian education model to empower and uplift Korean American families. Integrating the psychological concept of family resilience, Korean cultural family values, and Christian understandings on the family, this model searches for and strengthens family resilience in the context of the faith community, the family of God.

Clarifying the Terms

The Christian Education Model that I propose for Korean American Families is not a set of curricula that prescribes the details and exact steps to follow. Rather, as a model, it is “a description of educational ministry that provides a pattern for our actions.”¹ It points to the direction and guides to the path that leads to family resilience. By presenting a model, therefore, I am not finalizing implications of the rich theories or limiting the possibilities for other forms of education models. Through this model, I articulate, for the given context, an appropriate “pattern” of what educational practice would look like for Korean American families. Therefore, this model is subject to change and is open to revision based on the experiences and particularities of each congregation.

¹ Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Education for Continuity and Change: A New Model for Christian Religious Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 18.

I call this a Christian education model because the Christian faith tradition is at the heart of this model. It is religious in a broad sense, but Christian in particular. The term education should not be mistaken for educational instructions given to children or youth in a Sunday school classroom setting as is commonly understood in the Korean church. It is neither limited to an education department nor applicable only to certain age groups. Education includes all possible opportunities for learning so that it involves the entire life of a faith community. The term education can be replaced with “educational ministry” for the purpose of augmenting the meaning.

Guiding Principles

Reflecting on the historical and social analysis of Korean immigrants and the theories explored in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I draw out guiding principles for a Christian education model for Korean American families. (I will call it the Family Resilience Model from now on.) Many of these principles are commonly rooted in several theories while some are supported by one particular theory. Also, some principles are not fully discrete, but closely related to one another. For each principle, I explicate what it means, how theories of the previous chapters inform it, and what it looks like when embodied in a Christian community. These principles and assumptions underlie the Family Resilience Model, guiding “our future practice” of education for Korean American families.

1. The Family Resilience Model *engages in the past, present, and future of Korean American Christian families*. The starting point of this study was feeling the pain of the present Korean American families. To provide educational assistance, I went back to the past which included Korean immigrant history, traditional Korean family values, and the Christian faith tradition to glean from them sources of strength and resilience.

The task of connecting to the future is constructing an education model that seeks for changes and enhancement in families. By nurturing resilience, the families are preparing for the future to cope better with adversity.

The survey in Chapter 2 shows that Korean immigrants live with discrimination, barriers, depression, and an identity-crisis. Within families, generational conflicts emerge as a major issue in addition to tensions between spouses and isolation of the elderly. However, they also display much strength: an emphasis on education, hope for the future, resilience, strong family attachment, and Christian faith. The past gives a direction for the future. The Korean immigration history portrays painful experiences, but also stories of strong determination and achievement. With solid faith and courage, they endured hardships and worked for a larger cause. Korean cultural heritage, which appears to be a source of conflict, also offers many assets such as family-centeredness, mutual dependency, and collaborative efforts. Christian understandings provide profound insights and directions for educational ministry which will shape the future of the family.

Engaging in past, present, and future, the model will continuously listen to the voice of Korean immigrants and attend to their concerns and needs while recognizing their strengths. It will encourage people to examine historical information and biblical traditions closely which will include the history of Korean immigration, traditional Korean family values, Christian notions of family, and biblical studies on families whose life was grounded in immigration, for example. Drawing from these resources, the families will construct practical ways to meet the needs and enhance the strengths of families.

2. This model recognizes *family as the primary socialization context of individuals*. Individuals do not exist apart from the family so that it is the most basic ground of human life. The family life is so fundamental and basic that simply being a family together has immense effects on its members. This notion of shared life is especially important in transmitting Christian faith. Because Christian faith is a way of life, not a piece of knowledge that can be taught, it can be best communicated in the basic context of human life: the family.

Christian education informs this principle. Horace Bushnell has been one of the strongest voices on this subject by highlighting the dimension of family life as an organic unity. The family shares and naturally transmits life. The Christian life and spirit of the parents flow into children, thereby shaping their values, behaviors, thoughts, opinions, faith, and love. Life in the family best educates and the family setting is the most proper place to educate. Studies on resilience also demonstrate the family to be the primary context that nurtures resilience. The resilient self is developed most effectively in relations in which significant others provide affirmation. Supportive and positive interactions within the family build competence, which then nurtures resilience. Confucianism also perceives family as the basis of human life, even prior to an individual. Hence, proper life in the family is the most primary way of teaching and learning.

This principle offers a major change in education ministry in the Korean American church. Because the individual never exist alone apart from his/her family, the church must consider family as the basic unit to which she ministers. Family ministry becomes “a perspective” rather than a partial or one-time program, although it includes

various programs.² Family becomes the most effective means of education rather than one of the many objects of education. All dimension of congregation life address and engage the family. Moreover, the family life at home will be valued so that the model will encourage families to spend more meaningful time together while reducing family-splitting programs in the church.

3. Within the family, *parents are the primary educators*. As the most crucial “significant others,” parents leave lasting impressions on the child’s values and attitudes. They are called primary educators because they are the most influential figures with whom their children spend most time, especially during the tenderest ages. In general, children are formed and shaped most considerably by their parents while they are young. Parents’ life at home which transparently reflects their faith becomes the key in Christian education in family. However, this assumption does not neglect the opposite flow of influence; children also affect adults and become sources of learning. Parents are also challenged and encouraged by the presence of children to grow and cared for.

In Christian families, parents reflect God’s love to children; the invisible becomes visible for them. On the other hand, as Bushnell criticizes, they become the key persons who can give “ostrich nurture” to the child. The concept of family resilience emphasizes a balance between authority and flexibility in parenting which provides protection, nurturance, and guidance. Qualitative research reveals that Korean immigrant parents feel inadequate about or negligent of their parenting role due to a lack of knowledge about the dominant culture and/or busy demanding life as immigrants. Children express the pain caused by the lack of parental support or a deep gratitude for parents’ prayer and patience.

² Wigger, 120.

This recognition calls for parental education which is an urgent and essential task of the Korean American church. The family ministry will make education opportunities accessible to parents. It will provide not only faith nurturance for parents and instructions on the Christian ways of educating children, but also parenting skills, up-to-date education information, and deeper understandings of the children growing up in America. Networking systems among parents will be established so that they can share information and wisdom while praying for and supporting one another.

4. The Family Resilience Model strongly affirms *the sacredness of the family*. If one is unaware of this sacredness, life at home seems very meaningless and irrelevant to faith. Christians sometimes live a dualistic life by drawing a clear line between the church and family life. However, faith life involves both dimensions, and family is a more general area where Christian faith is lived out. When looked at with eyes of faith, every dimension of family life is sacred because God is present in its midst.

The family is sacred because it is the place of revelation. The theological understandings of the family inform that the conjugal covenant is a symbol of God's communion with the people, and God's love is powerfully portrayed and experienced through familial relationships. The family members display such love among themselves through self-giving, caring, and nurturing in the same way God has done. Moreover, the family is sacred because God is present and reveals God's activity in the very ordinary life of the family. It is a symbol of God's redeeming grace.

The sacredness of the family has enormous implications for education. Family spirituality becomes an essential dimension of family ministry, helping the family members to cultivate a keen sense of the awareness for God's love and grace revealed in

the family life. It also involves disciplining themselves to participate in that love by practicing it at home. They are encouraged to pray, read the scripture, and worship together. Intimacy, equality, humility, hospitality, and self-reflection are qualities to learn and practice at home. Special family occasions and Christian holidays are times to discern God's love. Every dimension of family life is an opportunity to know, grow, and participate in God's grace, and family ministry engages families to experience the sacredness of family life.

5. Family processes are the keys to resilient families. Resilience does not come from certain static traits but from the processes the family goes through in the face of adversity. When families confront a crisis event, they need effective ways to deal with it by assessing the situation and making an appropriate adaptation. Such steps engage family processes and the processes are more learned than inherent.

The family resilience concept informs that there are common key processes, and these can promote families to function more effectively in the face of crisis situations. Family belief systems enable families to broaden their perspective in crisis situation and make a meaning out of it. With a positive outlook for the future, they try to make the most out of the situation. The family organizational patterns include flexibility to reorganize and restructure patterns of interactions, connectedness among the members for mutual support and commitment, and social and economic resources which provide emotional and tangible support. Communication and problem-solving processes are also important. Open and clear information must be shared, emotions shared in a safe environment, and effective decisions made through collaborative efforts. These processes can be nurtured.

This principle becomes an overarching principle for the Resilience Model.

Christian faith is significant in itself, but it is also crucial for nurturing resilience. Based on Christian faith, families are guided to see adversity from a broader perspective and to have a hope in God who is the ultimate source so that the crisis situations and meaning of life are reflected in light of the Bible. Promoting healthy family functions such as communication skills, effective interactions, problem-solving strategies, and collaborative decision making will be a practical aspect of family ministry. In addition, the model will enhance family resources by providing helpful information and referring to outside social organizations.

6. This education model *affirms family diversity and builds upon these strengths*.

The contemporary interpretation of theology and social science acknowledge inclusive and diverse concepts of the family. Rather than absolutizing the structure of the traditional “normal” family, the family in its diverse forms is affirmed; nuclear family, extended family, single-parent family, and blended family are all adequate forms of the family. In the same vein, the notion of a healthy family is modified. A healthy family is not problem-free, but strong and resilient, persistently striving to make the best out of the given circumstances. Therefore, the Family Resilience Model emphasizes the family functioning instead of the form. It focuses on the strengths of the family rather than on its weaknesses.

A close examination of the Bible affirms the diversity of the family and God’s grace upon them. While explicating an ideal sense of family, the Bible also illustrates how God works through families of diverse structures and reveals God’s presence among them. The family resilience concept in particular focuses on family strengths rather than

weaknesses. Instead of highlighting the structure, it nurtures key family processes which include a belief system, organizational patterns, and communication/ problem-solving processes. It enriches resources which families can utilize in their functioning.

In this sense, this education model *for* Korean immigrant families is a paradigm *by* families. Instead of seeing families as a subject of remedy, the model assists them to identify and empower their inherent strengths. The search for strengths will involve an investigation of various sources: Christian faith, Korean cultural tradition, and a history of Korean immigration. Families will ground themselves on a deeper and enduring source of power through Christian understandings of family and faith. The model will engage them in identifying and building upon the assets of Korean cultural traditions such as cooperation, mutual dependence, sacrificial service, and an extended-family system. Investigation on early immigrant families will help them reclaim their lost legacies. Instead of pointing out and fixing problems, this model will empower families to help themselves.

7. Affirmation of Korean ethnicity is crucial for building a healthy Korean American identity and also for nurturing resilience in Korean families. Ethnicity is an integral part of immigrants, and a deep and healthy relationship with it is the basis of a self-identity. Without a strong affirmation from significant others and main socialization contexts, the experiences of ethnicity can become negative and demeaning; when it is encountered and explored in a safe and supportive environment, Korean Americans become competent individuals. Such competence leads to a strong bicultural identity and resilience.

Living as ethnic minorities, Korean Americans struggle with an identity crisis and low self-esteem, as the interviews revealed. Studies in social sciences show that the healthiest model of acculturation is an integrated identity in which one maintains a strong cultural identity as well as positive relations with the dominant society. The resilience concept also affirms that biculturalism is a resilient outcome of crisis situations that are sated with discrimination and barriers. Moreover, ethnic values underlie a family's schema and greatly influence the adaptation process of families.

Designed particularly for Korean immigrant families, this model incorporates Korean ethnic elements. Positive experiences of ethnicity will be offered through various activities such as learning Korean language and culture, participating in celebrations and holidays, exploring unfamiliar dimensions of Korean culture and drawing out strengths from them, encountering both historical and contemporary Korean figures that have made great contributions. The model will seek to develop in Korean immigrants a deep appreciation for Korean heritage. However, the goal is to craft a transcultural identity. Understanding and appreciating other ethnic cultures, including the American culture, will also be encouraged since its absence will lead to ethnocentrism.

8. *The family exists not only for its own sake but also for the world.* While striving for well-being of the family, the family also turns to other families and the world, building up communions with others. This notion illuminates a new insight on family resilience. The ultimate goal of the Family Resilience Model is not confined to mere survival or overcoming adversity, but seeing and participating in the redeeming activity of God. Families reach out and relate to others in meaningful ways so that they offer

hands to those in needs and work to restore justice and peace. Hence, the meaning of resilience broadens; families become strong enough to help themselves and others as well.

This principle is informed by all theories. Bradley Wigger's search for deeper meanings of the family leads one to seeing beyond one's immediate family, to God's movement for the world. The Pope's *Familiaris Consortio* clearly notes the family's mission for the larger world in restoration for justice and dignity for all persons. Family spirituality cultivates one's awareness for the world. The family-centered Confucian ethics also strive for the stability of the larger society. The basic propriety learned in family setting is to be extended to participate and cooperate with the community. The early immigrant families demonstrated their concern for the larger community by participating in the Korean independence movement and caring for the needy despite their underprivileged life conditions.

Practical implications for this principle broaden the perspective of family ministry. Its primary concern is strengthening families to overcome adversity, but it engages more than immediate family issues. With a deeper understanding of the family, families are encouraged to turn to others and the world, to practice care and service at home. In this sense, adversity and resilience are given new meanings in the Christian faith. Adversity becomes an opportunity to discern God's grace, and resilience includes the strengths to sustain not only the family but also others in the larger world.

9. Related to the eighth principle is that *family is dependent upon the larger community: the family of God*. While the families do have inner strengths, they are also dependent upon the larger community in becoming resilient. The faith community functions as one of the most powerful contexts which nurture competence in the family

through encouragement and further resources. The families can ask for help when needed because healthy families are resilient *in* relationship. In short, the context of education for the family embodies the aim of this model; strengthening family resilience *in* the community of faith.

The significance of a larger community is noted by many theories. The resilience theory informs that, in the same way individual resilience is promoted in relation, the family gains resilience in a nurturing context. The community provides social resource which includes emotional, instrumental, and informational support. Korean tradition of extended-family demonstrates that the main and the branch families are connected, dependent upon one another for moral and material support. In Christian faith tradition, the family's relationship with the larger community of church is intimate. The radical new family of God is more than a sustainer of the human family; the two mutually influence and transform each other to participate actively in the movement of God.

The Resilience Model acknowledges the church as an extended family. As an extended family, the members learn to ask for help and offer hands whenever needed. Family ministry strengthens each family to be resilient and faithful while the church is also enriched by families. It encourages intergenerational and multifamily gatherings so that family members will be nurtured by rich experiences shared among individuals of different ages, genders, and backgrounds. The family ministry will also supplement outside resources. As Korean Americans' social life is highly confined to the life within the Christian church, the church provides crucial information necessary for successful adaptation in the dominant society, and also builds connecting bridges to social organizations. The outside resource can be expansive: social security services, health

services, financial assistance and services, legal immigration services, family counseling services, and so on.

10. Lastly and conclusively, the Resilience Model embodies that *the family is a part of an interrelated, organic whole*. The families exist, like every creature, in “a web of relationships” so that everything in it is related to one another. Korean American families are particular, but they cannot be understood apart from the web of relationships in which they live. When perceived within their cultural, historical, psychological, religious, and socioeconomic context, the portrait of Korean American families becomes much more clear and accurate.

As Bradley Wigger contends in his work, the whole gives deeper meanings to the part, and the particularities of the part enrich the meaning of the whole. For Korean American families, the whole includes not only Christian understandings of family, but also the historical context of Korean immigration, the psychological understanding of their adaptation stress and power of resilience, and their cultural values and patterns of action which are still deeply rooted within. This whole gives a better understanding to families’ present concerns and strengths.

When this principle is implied, the model becomes holistic. As mentioned earlier, it integrates past, present, and future of Korean immigrant families. The problems arise from the present, but the past informs and provides a direction for the future. The history is a part of humanity which enriches the meaning of human identity, faith, and family. While focusing on the family, the model also attends to individual development within the family and family’s relation with the larger community. In terms of cultural heritage, Korean ethnicity is highlighted. However, the goal is not to segregate Korean ethnicity

apart from the dominant culture, but to integrate the two in order to encourage biculturalism. The family is viewed through diverse lenses: theological, educational, historical, socio-analytical, and personal. The definition of the family is reinterpreted and expanded, and its diversity acknowledged. The education approaches also involve the whole life of the church instead of certain dimensions. The goal is for families to be resilient in order to build families and also the world. It is to move along with God's rhythm for the world, the organic unity. Moreover, by sharing the task of Christian education with other institutions, the model embodies an educational ecology.

Outline of the Model

Based on the principles mentioned above, I design an education model for Korean American families. As an outline, this section traces the pattern of educational actions within a faith community. It clarifies the aim, goals, methods, and context of the model. Also, I present four education approaches and address the issue of leadership.

Aim

The aim of the Family Resilience Model is to nurture resilience in Korean American families based on the Christian understandings of God's redeeming activity by identifying and increasing family resources through Christian education in a community of faith. As a result, the families would not be defeated by adversity, but learn and grow to embody God's love despite hardships. Hence, resilience means overcoming crisis situation in their families, not alone but in connection to the faith community and for the larger world. It also involves struggling to participate in God's redeeming activity.

Korean American families need resilience to confront the stress of immigrant life. Resilience is not innate, but nurtured in a context of which the Christian church can be

one of the most influential communities. As the families build on their faith in God and utilize resources made available within the church, their resilience is nurtured. This education model, therefore, seeks to promote family resilience.

Goals

The goals are directly related to the ten principles mentioned above. Embodying the underlying principles, the model seeks to meet the following goals.

1. To explore the past of Korean and Christian traditions in light of the present context of Korean American immigrants and to construct ways to respond effectively to the needs of families.

2. To focus on, address, and engage the family as a major unit of education ministry.

3. To discipline parents to be mature Christians and to equip them with adequate knowledge and support so that they can become effective primary educators.

4. To cultivate family spirituality in which members recognize and participate in God's movement in every dimension of life at home.

5. To promote healthy family processes which include belief systems (Christian faith in particular), family organizational patterns, and communication/problem-solving processes.

6. To affirm diverse forms of family and to empower families by identifying and enhancing their inherent strengths.

7. To engage family members in Korean ethnic experiences in order to promote an appreciation and love for Korean heritage and to develop a positive self-identity as Korean Americans.

8. To promote families' engagement in caring for and serving the larger world, seeking justice and peace for all.

9. To build up the community of faith as an extended family in which all members mutually depend upon one another.

10. To provide an organic understanding of the family and to nurture family resilience in a holistic way.

Methods

The Family Resilience Model employs several methods and they arise from underlying principles and goals. The first one is socialization, or “enculturation” as defined by John Westerhoff. He criticizes contemporary Christian education for its heavy reliance on “school-instruction paradigm” and proposes “a community of faith-enculturation paradigm”; the church is a faith community and Christian education is a means for the members to become enculturated into that community.³ Therefore, the very life and all interactions among members become a means of education.

Bushnell points out the enculturating nature of family life through the concept of the organic unity. The atmosphere of the family permeates and shapes the members so that every aspect of family life is important. The resilience concept also maintains that the whole cultural ecology surrounding either enhances or restricts the development of competence in individuals. Therefore, the Family Resilience Model focuses on all the dimensions of life and interactions within both the church and the family. Because family resilience based on the Christian faith can best be strengthened in relationships, the model plans intentional and meaningful interactions. Some of the learning

³ John H. Westerhoff, III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 6, 50.

experiences do take place in the format of school-instruction paradigm, but they are partial and intended to stimulate and enrich these interactions.

Another method is integration of the history of people and the history of Christian faith with the present. History is not irrelevant past, but a meaningful source of power which provides directions for us in the present situation. Although history is not faultless, it is filled with riches when we look observantly. The early Korean immigration history is filled with painful experiences that the contemporary immigrants can relate to. Within it, they also find courage and resilience which offer them strength. Korean cultural traditions provide essential virtues and values that can be adapted for today. Christian heritage illuminates deeper meanings of life which broaden one's perspectives for crisis. Therefore, the Resilience Model investigates the historical source and draws out meanings, strengths, resilience, and hope, which are then linked to the present experience of Korean immigrant families. In this model, reinterpretation of the past takes place.

Related to the second one is "narrative" method. Although it involves connecting "persons and events across time," the narrative method focuses on the power of story that binds and transforms people.⁴ Storytelling, dramatization, and ritual reenactments not only stimulate the imagination and communicate more abundantly, but also transmit "cultural beliefs and values and patterns of action."⁵ The intergenerational religious education experience relies heavily on sharing, chiefly stories. The participants will share their own stories and experiences. They will also hear the stories of other Korean American figures, early Korean immigrants, and the biblical narratives. Stories appeal to both young and old, and can be told using simple words, which makes it ideal for a group

⁴ Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 131.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

with two-languages and two-cultures. Through stories, Korean Americans can learn more deeply about each other, themselves, their families, their ethnic heritage, Christian tradition, and their relatedness to the world.

Another essential method is “praxis.” The term comes from liberation theology and it points to dialectic between reflection and action. Therefore, a model of religious education based on liberation theology is, as Daniel Schipani maintains, “communal in nature and shape, dialogical in spirit, prophetic and eschatological in vision, and praxis oriented and conscientizing with a dialectical-hermeneutical character.”⁶ The concept of Robert W. Pazmino’s “transformative Christian education” clarifies both the process and the goal of liberative education.

Christian education can be defined as the process of sharing or gaining the particulars of the Christian story and truth (information) and Christian values, attitudes, and life-styles (formation) and fostering the conversion of people, communities, societies, and structures (transformation) by the power of the Holy Spirit to a fuller expression of God’s reign in Jesus Christ. Education in general can be defined as the process of sharing content with people in the context of their community and society. This process in Christian education requires the partnership of God with people who are called and gifted to teach and the openness of people to *the possibility of transformation*. This definition incorporates the three essential elements or foci of education that various philosophies of education have stressed: namely, content or information; people or formation; and community/society or transformation.⁷

By employing the “praxis” method, I seek growth and formation, conversion and transformation in the lives of Korean American families. The end is not simply to give instructions or enhance knowledge, but to bring on-going changes in the ways of being and the commitment to the will of God.

⁶ Daniel S. Schipani, “Liberation Theology and Religious Education” in *Theologies of Religious Education*, ed. Randolph Crump Miller (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1995), 299.

⁷ Robert W. Pazmino. *Latin American Journey: Insights for Christian Education in North America* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1994), 61 (*italics mine*).

The three steps of doing liberation theology become the frame of praxis method: social-analytical, hermeneutical, and practical mediations.⁸ In many educational experiences, people will engage in first analyzing the present action/reality of families, the church, and/or the society. After examining all the things that are being done (and not done) presently, then they would reflect upon these activities and attitudes in light of God's word. They would assess whether the actions and values are congruent with the new ways of living according to the gospel. Thirdly, they would come up with an action plan. The action proposal may begin with minor modifications, yet it would be practical and viable enough to ultimately shape and transform people and the world. It will address individuals, families, and faith communities to initiate changes. After carrying out the primary actions, people would meet again and reflect upon their actions and make revisions for future actions. The cycle of action-reflection-action will continue as long as they remain faithful to God's love and plan for this world. In this sense, the faith community and the family function as a "holding environment" which "support[s] the person where they are (hold on), challenge[s] the person to move beyond where they are (let go), and remain[s] in relation with the person when they change (stay put)."⁹ The holding environment creates a safe, yet challenging space that provides encouragement and accountability for needed changes.

⁸ See Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987). Boff and Boff introduce three steps, which they call "mediations," to doing liberation theology. The first one is social-analytical mediation. They try to analyze the present social reality using the social sciences. Instead of blaming the poor for their poverty, it examines the causes of poverty. The second step is hermeneutical mediation. With this problem of poverty, they turn to the Bible and try to interpret it from the perspective of the poor. They try to understand what God's plan is for this social and political problem. The third step is practical mediation in which they come up with a course of action to take in order to overcome the problem of poverty in accordance with God's plan.

⁹ Carol Lakey Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 60.

Context

The main context of the Family Resilience Model is the Korean American Christian church, and it is to be extended to Korean American homes. Both contexts are mutually dependent since educational experiences in the church setting enhance family interactions, and, in turn, interactive families enrich the life of the faith community.

Approaches

The Family Resilience Model proposes four major approaches to learning experiences. Reflecting what the church is already doing well, the approaches build upon the existing practices as well as initiate new ones. For each approach, I describe the locale, form, content, and leadership.

However, the content of education for Korean American families is not completely discrete for each approach. The following is a basic list of the content that is all inclusive; these subjects will be incorporated in each approach. But certain approaches will have added content in order to meet particular needs of each approach.

- Theological and biblical understandings of the family: God's movement at home and family life, sacredness of the family, family spirituality as a way of Christian education for family.
- Korean traditional family values: family-centeredness, mutual dependence, cooperation, responsibility, extended family, women's resilience.
- Sources of resilience in Korean immigrant history: the independence movement, the formation of Christian church, the empowering education in the church, women's contributions to family and social life.
- Resource for family interaction: communication skills, sharing emotions, conflict resolution, decision making.
- Social resource: information on and reference to social service organizations.

- Theology of marginality presented by Jung Young Lee.¹⁰
- Model Korean American figures: the stories of historical and contemporary Korean American figures who displayed resilience.¹¹

1. Faith Community Life

Korean immigrants are highly church-centered and this is their strength. Living as immigrants, they have come to know God more closely, and the church functions as a significant context which shapes and strengthens the families. However, the church is not a strong advocate of the family; the value of the family is seldom affirmed, its concerns not fully addressed, and family members most time separated during the church gatherings.¹²

The life at the church becomes the key to strengthening families. Perceiving a faith community as the culture which endures, shapes, and teaches individuals, Ellis Nelson claims that “what the congregation as a group says and does in the community is the meaning they give to their faith.”¹³ Therefore, in the Faith Community Life approach, the congregation recognizes and affirms families. The church involves families as a family unit in learning experiences, specifically through the five traditional tasks of the

¹⁰ Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Rejecting the classical definition of marginality that defines marginal people as rejected by both the dominant group and the native country, Lee proposes a holistic view. As waves ebb back to the center from the edge of a pond, marginal people can look at the world from the margin so that create a center in the margin while creating margins in the center. Hence, instead of belonging to neither, they belong to both. Moreover, the margin becomes “in-beyond” by including both self-negation and self-affirmation. The more they are negated by the two groups, the more they embrace both groups. Lee’s theology of marginality can enhance the experience of marginality and the meaning of bicultural-ness in light of the Word of God.

¹¹ See *Distinguished Asian Americans: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Hyung-Chan Kim (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999); Resources can be also found at www.koreancentennial.org.

¹² I believe that age-segregated education is necessary, but must not be the main approach to education in a community of faith.

¹³ C. Ellis Nelson, *Where Faith Begins* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967), 185.

church: *kerygma, koinonia, diakonia, propheteia, and leitourgia*.¹⁴ The Christian meaning and value of the family will be proclaimed in the Word. The family as a unit will be invited to engage in the community life, service project for the society, advocacy of God's reign, and worship service. The very life in the community of faith becomes an educational approach. Through this life, families will not only learn to value the family, but also grow together within the community of faith.

Life in the faith community that is committed to the Christian way inevitably teaches families new values. The ultimate goal of immigrant life is not merely achieving "the American Dream" of economic and social stability, but participating in the activity of God who loves and cares for people. Therefore, in this community, their value of and the drive for the American Dream is reevaluated in light of the gospel. The destructive dimensions of the success, obsession, and materialism are to be discerned apart from the Christian understandings of blessing, which are often interwoven together. It's a communal task to re-interpret and re-illuminate the destructive values that are deeply embedded in the life of Korean American families and communities. Changes in values must accompany continuous transformation in the ways of life and further in the structure of the society. The members practice to respect people regardless their social status or class. They focus less on achievement and success, and more on affirmation of each person based on his/her dignity bestowed by God. Material is used to enrich people's lives, not to manipulate them. Such values alter their way of life at home; parents contemplate about their pattern of life and spend more time and energy *with* the children

¹⁴ See Pazmino, 55-75. Integrating Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy and Christian tradition, Pazmino presents the "Transformative Christian education" which begins with five tasks of church. He calls for transformation in these areas. In the same manner, I maintain that the educational ministry for the family must involve all these areas.

instead of *for* them. They also work to bring changes in the society in the areas in which these values are not reflected.

By focusing on the life together, the main form of family education will be intergenerational religious education.¹⁵ The presence of multi-generations will enrich families' learning by bringing in experiences of people with different gender, ages, and background. Intergenerational worship service will be held on special occasions such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, New Year Eve, and Mother's Day. Service and mission projects will also engage families. Parents would drop off and pick up children less, but come to church together to participate in the same activity. The Faith Community Life approach will provide learning opportunities as well as fun time for the whole family so that the frequency and the quality of their interactions and communications can be increased.

The leadership will begin with pastors and be extended to participants who have skills, enthusiasm, and commitment. Since it involves the whole life of the congregation, many leaders are needed as well as fresh insights and ideas. Any educational ministry that involves intergenerational experience can use bicultural persons as leaders. The 1.5 generation Korean Americans are good candidates because being bilingual and bicultural, they can identify with both generations and function as a catalyst in intergenerational interactions.

¹⁵ See James W. White, *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988), 18. His definition of "intergenerational religious education" is helpful for understanding and designing a program; "Intergenerational religious education is two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common-experiences, parallel-learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive-sharing."

2. Cell Gathering

Korean churches in general have a strong cell (or district) meeting in which several families, generally divided by the area they live in, gather regularly at home for worship and fellowship. It functions as a network system within the church for the purpose of communicating information, providing intimate care and support, and studying and practicing the Word in a small group. This gathering is by nature intergenerational. However, in general, the focus of the group is adults and the children are left unattended during the gathering.

The Cell Gathering can be promoted into a family cluster program.¹⁶ This gathering of several nuclear families creates an extended family which Korean immigrants have left in their home land. The extended family from the traditional Korean society consisted of several families and they were mutually dependent. They helped one another in times of need and their one strength was the ability to ask for help.

The Cell Gathering includes singles as well and all the members mutually learn from, encourage, and support one another. Various intergenerational experiences take place through the Faith Community Life approach; however intimate and private atmosphere of home setting can elicit more effective learning. The Cell Gathering unit functions as a network system as the members exchange information and support. Learning experience in the Cell Gathering approach focuses on interaction and sharing among generations through worship service, studies on various themes, celebrations of Christian and Korean holidays, service project for the neighborhood and the community,

¹⁶ See Margaret M. Sawin, *Family Enrichment with Family Clusters* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1979). Sawin presents a family group program called "Family Clusters" in which four to five families meet for a number of weeks for learning experience.

and much more. By attending to and learning from one another, families will also learn to esteem people who are the sources of their learning and growth.

Leadership is by the cell leader who usually directs the gathering. For each experience he/she will attend leadership training offered at the church. Based on the provided guideline for each meeting, the leader can adjust and adapt the activity for the particular group. On the other way around, by listening to the families' concerns, the leader may bring up specific needs that require attention. Then pastors can design appropriate programs to address those needs.

3. Parent Education

Parent education is not nonexistent in Korean church, but very feeble. The program is offered sporadically without a comprehensive outlook. The parents feel the need for it so that a well-planned program will draw participants and leave lasting influence on them and their families.

The role of parents in education is crucial. Bushnell claims that parents are the key persons who can give either "Christian nurture" or "ostrich nurture" to the child. Studies on resilience affirm that parents are the most influential significant others who build competence in children. It is generally parents who provide nurturance, initiate and foster faith in children, and sustain healthy family functioning although the reverse flow takes place. Therefore, they need education for good parenting.

The Parent Education approach will be more instructional in method, compared to other approaches. The meeting will be held on a regular basis, either monthly or biweekly. Special seminars or workshops can be given occasionally. However, the goal would not be simply to offer instructions, but to have them reflect upon and share

together their journey of parenting. They would share their knowledge, wisdom, insights, concerns, despairs, and hopes as they look back at their paths and also plan for the future directions. In this sense, the Parent Education approach serves as a “support group” which provides continuous resource, encouragement, and support.

The content of parent education is vast. To train parents to be effective primary faith educators at home, faith education becomes an essential. Faith is not something that can be taught in simple lessons, but through various experiences over an extended period of time so that faith nurturing will be the focus of the Parent Education as well as the focus of ministry in general. The critical role of parenting in the development of children will also be explored, and it will include parenting resources: deeper Christian understandings of family, self-esteem, Christian discipline, communication skills, conflict resolution, etc. To enhance their confidence in child rearing and education in American society, they need information and knowledge on this matter such as the school system and college admission. For economic and social stability of the family, parents need assistance from social organizations, which will provide information on the banking and mortgage system, welfare benefits, health benefits, the social security service, immigration law, taxes, family counseling, etc. Marriage enrichment is also needed because it deepens the couple’s relationship, which then affects the atmosphere of the home.

Leadership in parent education falls primarily on pastors and Christian education directors. Depending on the topic of education, experts can be invited as guest speakers. The parent participants can also assume the partnership role with leaders, since their experience of parenting can bring insights and wisdoms to be shared.

4. Family Life

A strong attachment among members is a great asset of the Korean family. The Confucian value deeply engrained in the family promotes sacrificial love and filial piety, although these qualities have been weakened in some degree. However, the hierarchical structure within Confucian values has deterred the members from having an open and affirming relationship. The busy lives of immigrants and cultural and language gaps between the generations also have been obstacles to qualitative interactions within the family. Again, faith is often neglected in the realm of family life.

The family is the primary socialization context so that every dimension of life at home teaches and shapes its members. The biblical and theological understandings of the family inform that God's love and redeeming activity are revealed in the ordinary life of the family. Without keen eyes and perception, it's easy to dismiss the sacredness of it. In addition, the family nurtures competence in individuals. Through continuous affirmation, encouragement, and support of family members, individuals learn to be competent and resilient. By employing effective family processes, the family as a unit can also become resilient.

Family life is cultivated as the center of reflection for God's love and the crucible of competence. Through interactions among family members and mundane activities, God's love and presence becomes tangible for them. What they have learned in the Parent Education, such as communication and conflict resolution skills, will be employed in relationships. All members will be affirmed of their God-given dignity. In addition, brokenness and frailness of families, particularly of Korean immigrant families, need to be lifted up and reflected in light of God's grace. No family is perfect, but it is grace that

affirms and equips families to participate in God's activity. Honest and open talk can help family members to see the frailty of their family and of their familial relationships. Confessions of wrong doings and forgiveness practiced at home can help families discern God's abundant grace more intentionally. While cultivating the sacredness of every dimension of family life, a special time will also be set aside for a meaningful interaction and learning.

In busy modern life, family time is crucial and needs to be reinforced by a larger faith community. Family time and activities can often be perceived as an extra overwhelming burden to families that are already busy with other responsibilities and commitments. However, the focus is not so much on doing something extra or new, but doing the same thing with more intentionality, support, and resources. The Family Life approach involves providing support in doing what they are already doing so that they will be able to see, interpret, and give meanings to their ordinary activities. By being more intentional and focused, the family members learn and participate in God's activity and also grow in their relationships with one another. Moreover, as they re-illuminate their busyness in light of the gospel, and they can learn to cultivate a pattern of life that is free from the grips of the drive for the American Dream.

Both the Parent Education and the Faith Community Life approaches provide appropriate resources for the Family Life. Family spirituality is the essential content of this approach, and the spiritual practices include prayer, study of the scripture, having meals, celebrations, and social service, to name some. By engaging in these practices, family members shape their own lives to be in rhythm with God's love and grace for all people and the world. Positive interactions and ethnic affirmation will develop strong

self-identity, competence, and resilience in members. Family rituals and traditions also develop one's religious and ethnic identity. Based on Christian and Korean holidays/traditions, families build up rituals and traditions that are unique to their family.

Leadership rests primarily on parents. They are trained through the Parent Education. As leaders, the parents are responsible for initiating and engaging in meaningful family interactions. Without a strong intention and determination, family time can easily be lost. They also need to be attentive to the voice of children and fully engage in family interactions with an open heart and expectations to grow, knowing the children are also sources of learning.

Literature Resource

Many books are written both in English and Korean concerning Christian parents and family. These resources can be accessible to families by activating the church library. The library should continuously add books to family section and publicize the new books. The basic collection can start with variety of publications. (See Appendix B.)

Educational Ecology

Although I point out the significant role of the faith community in nurturing resilience in Korean American families, I do also acknowledge the need for the church to work along with other institutions. The task of Christian education becomes more empowering and effective as other institutions share the work. I provide names of several organizations that can help accomplish these tasks. (See Appendix C.)

Sample Program

There are very limited numbers of published curriculums for Korean American families. It is urgent to create and develop bilingual and bicultural materials that address

the particular needs of Korean American families. I have designed and used this program in a particular Korean American church where I served as a children's pastor. This program is far from being a full representation of the model I advocate, but embodies some dimensions of it. Although it is only a portion, each experience reflects the model. It serves as a starting point that invites churches to engage in implementing all families. (See Appendix D.)

Conclusion

The Family Resilience Model for Korean American Families is a response to contemporary Korean immigrant families' issues identified in chapter two. I integrate the resources explored in chapters one, three, four, and five, and present a pattern for educational actions. The model seeks to empower Korean American families that face many conflicts and crisis.

Underlying this model are ten basic principles. Engaging in past, present, and future of Korean American families, it affirms the family as the primary socialization context of individuals and parents as the primary educators. From a Christian perspective, every mundane dimension of family life is sacred because through it God's presence is revealed. To build family resilience, family processes are important and this draws one's attention to building up family strengths. Korean ethnicity is an important asset that becomes the basis of a healthy bicultural identity and also promotes resilience in Korean families. While the family is dependent upon the faith community for nurturance, it is also strengthened to serve the larger world. In this sense, the family is a part of the organic whole, and therefore, families are educated through a holistic way.

I present four major approaches. The first one is Faith Community Life approach which addresses and engages families in all dimensions of congregation life. The Cell Gathering approach is restructuring the existing cell meeting into a family cluster in which an “extended family” gathers in an intimate atmosphere to learn together. Both approaches are intergenerational so that the participants learn from one another’s rich sharing. The Parent Education approach educates and enhances parents’ resources to be effective and responsible faith nurturers and caretakers of the family in immigrant setting. The Family Life approach focuses on family spirituality at home, practicing a way of life that participates in God’s movement.

This comprehensive Family Resilience Model, when appropriately adapted to particular congregations, will definitely benefit Korean American families not only in their struggle to cope, but also in participation in the redeeming activity of God for all families.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

In the process of acculturation, Korean immigrants personally experience racism, identity-crisis, and downward social mobility. Korean immigrant families' struggles are even more intensified as conflicts between generations and spouses arise due to language and cultural differences as well as structural changes in the new land. In order to empower Korean American families, I present a Christian education model in this study.

Surveying the history of the early Korean immigration and the families provides not only a deeper understanding to the roots of Korean Americans, but also the source of resilience. Although their life in the sugarcane field was harsh, they were determined to endure hard work and sought to bring changes in various ways. Their first and foremost community organization was the Christian church which became the center of worship, education, political activities, and social service. As they gathered together in the church, they were comforted and also challenged to engage actively in learning, to support Korean independence movement, to collaborate mutually with one another, and to provide for the needs of other Korean immigrants. The early Korean immigrant women also greatly contributed to the family and the community by rising above their despairing life circumstances and actively participating in economic, political, and social advancement.

The study of the contemporary Korean immigrants helps one to understand better their lives and concerns so as to provide more adequate education for them. While trying very hard to adapt to the new society, Korean immigrants tend to have strong ethnic

attachment and continue to suffer. Particularly in the family, their Confucian values come into conflict with the Western values so that the first and the second generations are at discord with each other. The aged feel neglected while housewives are burdened with a double role. Although the strong familism of Korean culture draws them to the family, Korean American families are often too feeble and immobilized to uphold them. Korean American families need to be empowered, and for this purpose, I have constructed a Christian education model.

Family resilience is a very powerful concept that sheds light on families facing adversity. Resilient individuals and families actively respond to stress and grow from it rather than being destroyed or become dysfunctional. The appraisal process is important, and one's assessment of the crisis situation largely depends upon the availability of sufficient resources, both personal and social. The personal and the social resources are highly interrelated; competence, an essential trait for resilience and generally understood as an individual trait, is a product of social resource. Individuals gain self-esteem and competence through relationships with others in a community.

The concept of family resilience focuses on family processes of belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication/ problem-solving processes. The belief system enables families to view things in perspective with a positive outlook. Organizational patterns include being flexible and connected, and utilizing social and economic resources. Open and collaborative communication and problem-solving processes also sustain families through hardship. The concept also emphasizes inherent strengths of families and cultural values that shape families' appraisal process.

The Korean traditional family values and structures are examined, firstly, because they are a part of belief systems which influence the families' adaptation process, and secondly, because they are also sources of inherent strength. The Confucian family values and hierarchical structures have caused ill practices of oppression and subjugation. Nonetheless, by focusing on the underlying principles, one can draw out numerous qualities that can be promoted in Korean American families to nurture resilience. The clear goal and order within the family was to achieve stability and well-being of the family, and the members worked together displaying cooperation and responsibility. The mutual dependence between men and women, the old and the young, and the ancestors and the offspring sustained the family. Through their adaptation to harsh living conditions and the attainment of love and respect from their children, women showed the beauty of complementing the weaknesses of men and the power of resilience. The life of the extended family also demonstrated a collaborative effort in overcoming hardships and families' ability to ask for help when needed.

Confucianism's emphasis on ethics of self-control and propriety in one's relationship with others are essential elements to build up a community. Order and prosperity of the family is not exclusively for the sake of the family, but also for the well-being of the larger society. Individuals who learn to live in proper relationships within the family can also extend that propriety to the world.

The most crucial function of the resilient family is their belief systems, and for Korean Americans, they come from the Christian faith as well as the traditional Korean cultural values. Christian understandings of family life and home illuminate the deeper meanings, namely, God's movement: God's love, redeeming power, and presence among

people. The deeper meanings not only broaden one's perspective of family and the world, but also redirect one's attention to the details of family life. In the same vein, the family is called a domestic church for its sacredness. No matter how ordinary and fragile a family may be, it is sacred and every dimension of the family life reveals God's ever present grace. The faithful are called to see and participate in God's love and grace in the midst of their family life.

Family is the core place where faith is nurtured because of its nature as an organic unity. The very life of the parents flows into the children so that they learn by being and living together. Therefore, practice becomes a way of faith education. Through spiritual practices, family members can cultivate a way of life that recognizes God's activity. By being perceptive to all members, interactions among them, and the details of family life, they can grow and participate in God's love.

Integrating these theories, the Christian education model I present for Korean American families seeks to nurture resilience. Based on ten underlying principles, this model identifies and increases the resources of Korean American families through educational ministry. Firstly, it instills the Christian understandings of the family which place a family crisis in a broader perspective of God's movement. It also searches for and nurtures cultural values and each family's strengths that are inherent. It further enriches families' social resources by building up networks and providing information so that they can receive emotional, instrumental, and informational support. The Family Resilience Model is communal in the sense that it takes place within a context of the faith community. Families are strengthened not in isolation, but in relation to other families in the extended family of God. As families gather together and learn with and from one

another, they nurture, through communal efforts, competent and resilient individuals and families whose vision encompasses God's love and grace for all.

APPENDIX A

Interview Guidelines

(IS418 Family, Congregation and Community: Immigration, Education and Care.
Doctoral seminar at Claremont School of Theology, Spring 2001)

Part I – For individuals and families

Motivations to Immigrate

1. What were the different factors that motivated you (and the family) to immigrate to the US? What led you to your current place of residence?
2. To what degree have you accomplished the goals that you set for themselves in the US?
3. Name the challenges and barriers that you have faced in the US. (Employment, linguistic, racial, class, housing, citizenship status)
4. On a scale from one to ten with ten being in the highest degree, how would you describe the degree of frustration that you have encountered since your arrival?
5. Name your accomplishments, the things you have overcome and achieved.
6. On a scale from one to ten with ten being the highest degree, how would you describe the degree of success you have experienced since your arrival?

The Social Reality

1. What country are you from?
2. How many members of your family are still in country of origin? Who are they and how close are they to the family members in the US?
3. How many languages are spoken among the family members living in the US?
4. What skills, levels of education or resources did you or the adults in the family come with? (able to speak English, a particular profession, capital to start a business or buy a home)
5. Did you know anyone in the US before coming? To what degree had this person or family been integrated into the US culture? What help or resources did they provide or help you to access?
6. To what degree have you or your family adapted and integrated into the US culture? How would you describe your levels of participation in this society? (citizenship process, employment, have acquired a degree or particular level of education or special skill, part of a community organization, opportunities of study, able to speak English, drivers license, voting or politically active in some way, renter or home owner, part of social networks, have started own business, etc.)
7. Have you needed to go for medical care of any sort? Explain. Describe your experience in gaining access to health care in the US. How could the health care system be more responsive to the needs of your group?
8. When you feel something is wrong with your body what do you do?

9. When you feel very sad and lonely what do you do?
10. What do you do for recreation or to break the routine of every day?

Daily Experiences

1. Identify how life has changed for you- family roles and routines.
2. Speak about the issue of language- overcoming barriers, language of the second generation and communication at home.
3. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the education of your children?
4. What has it been like to find employment and housing? What situations have you encountered?
5. What do you see in this journey? What issues repeat themselves? What does this mean for your lives?
6. What forces do you see operating?

Ideologies

1. The “American dream” is an ideology that has informed the hopes and motivations of many immigrant families to the US. What does your family believe is possible? To what extent do you believe the “American dream” is possible? How would you say you have invested in this dream?
2. What is the vision, the hope for the future that you hold- for yourself currently, for the next generation?
3. Identity of a person and of a community is a vital part of the self. To believe in oneself, one’s talents, potential, to value this is a vital part of identity. What is the sense of identity that you and/or your family hold? How do you see yourself in light of the dominant culture? (creative, sure, defined, insecure, undefined)
4. The victim is a person who believes that circumstances and the social context are responsible for their ill lot in life. The actor is the person who takes hold of his/her circumstances not permitting them to determine their future but recreates them for his/her own benefit. To what contexts or what experiences have made you feel like a victim or an actor and what factors have contributed to these feelings?

Theology

1. From what spiritual wells do you draw?
2. If Christian, are there any particular biblical passages that you identify with?
3. Does prayer play a role in your lives? If so, please describe.
4. If you were to give God a name that describes who God has been to you throughout this journey, what would it be?
5. Who has God been to you in your country of origin? Who has God been to you during this journey? Are there any changes in how you see God? Did the journey of immigration have anything to do with your changing images of God? Explain.

6. Are there any other intermediaries, symbols, rituals or ideas that inform the spirituality for your journey?
7. Do you belong to a church or other community of faith? If so, what role has it played in your experience of immigration?

Implications

1. How are persons “in-formed” by the challenges of their new surroundings and life circumstances?
2. What role has the church played or could play in the life of the families?
3. What are their social networks comprised of? (family, friends, community based organizations, church, school)
4. Can you pick out phases or stages in the journey of immigration?
5. What is the relationship between the church and the socio-political order?
6. Is there a response of the immigrant church to injustice? Please describe.
7. What theology informs this faith community? What are the origins of this theology? To what extent has this community engaged its present environment so that its theology is informed by the present context?
8. What would you describe as the strategies of survival of this community?
9. What are the indigenous models of education present? Please describe.
10. Employment and education are the two important factors that shape the immigrant experience. How does participation in socio-economic institutions relate to ethnic identity?

Part II- Pastoral Dimensions

Ministry

1. How would you describe the goals and tasks of your ministry?
2. How are these informed by the frustrations, conflicts and strategies of survival of the members of your church? Are there any biblical passages that address these areas of needs?
3. Is there any conflict in your congregation? How might this conflict be a reflection of the daily life issues persons are facing?
4. What denomination do you belong to?
5. How do your denominational relationships enhance, support, ignore or obstruct the work of your ministry?
6. What resources does it provide? What additional frustrations or barriers does it pose?
7. Describe the ministry of education of your church. Who teaches? What educational structure do you have if any? What curriculum are you using? How would you assess this curriculum? How does this ministry help persons deal with their every day lives?
8. Describe the community your church is in- its needs and gifts.

9. What relationship does your congregation have with the community?
10. How do the ministries of the congregation engage the community?
11. If there are any programs geared to meet the needs of the community- How did this program come about? How do persons from the church and the community participate in this program? In what ways has this program impacted the life of the community?
12. What is the theology that informs your ministry?
13. What other congregations exist in your community? How do they relate to each others? Are there any ministerial alliances or associations and what are the purposes of these? Do these groups relate to the issues of the community? If so, how?
14. Are there other community organizations or services that you network with?
15. Describe your ministry of pastoral care? Who besides yourself is involved in the ministry of care? What are the elements that you consider important in giving care? What are the goals of your pastoral care?
16. What problems do you most encounter that persons are dealing with? How do you address these? Are there any resources you have to support your ministry of pastoral care? Have you had any preparation for ministry that has directly prepared you for dealing with these situations?

APPENDIX B

Literature Resources

Marriage Enrichment

Hong, Ilkwon. *Junbidon Gyulhon-ee Ahrumdapda* (Prepared Marriage is Beautiful). Seoul: Sangmyung-ui Malsumsa, 1998.

Christian Parenting

Hong, Ilkwon. *Mitum-ui Janyu-lo Kiwola* (Raise Faithful Children). Seoul: Sangmyung-ui Malsumsa, 2000.

Kim, Mikyung. *Kidokgyo Gajung Janyu Gyoyuk* (Child Education in the Christian Family). Seoul: Chonghoe Publishing House, 1999.

Oh, Insook. *Hyunmyung-han Boomo-ga Doira* (Become Wise Parents). Seoul: Kyujang, 2001.

Oh, Insook. *Nuhee Janyu-ui Jonkwiham-ul Alla* (Know the Dignity of Your Children). Seoul: Kyujang, 2004.

Park, Pil. *Dangsin-ui Mal-ee Janyu-lul Byonhwa Sikinda* (Your Words Change Your Children). Seoul: Kyujang, 2004.

Trent, John, Rick Osborne, and Kurt Bruner, eds. *Parents' Guide to the Spiritual Growth of Children*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000.

Christian Family and Spirituality

Ameiss, Bill, et al. *Package Deal: Family Issues*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2003.

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- Petro, Valerie L., and Lauren E. Marley. *Family-Friendly Web Sites for Kids*. New York: Paulist Press, 2001.
- Thompson, Marjorie J. *Family, the Forming Center: A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1989.
- Wolfe, Gregory, and Suzanne Wolfe. *Bless This House: Prayers for Families and Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Wright, Wendy. *Sacred Dwelling: A Spirituality of Family Life*. Leavenworth, KS: Forest of Peace Publishing, 1994.
- Yang, Eunsoon. *Sarang-gwa Hangbok-ui Daehwa* (Communication of Love and Happiness). Seoul: Home, 1997.

Family Ministry

- Freudenburg, Ben F., with Rick Lawrence. *The Family-Friendly Church*. Loveland, CO: Vital Ministry, 1998.

Griggs, Donald, and Patricia Griggs. *Generations Learning Together: Learning Activities for Intergenerational Groups in the Church*. Livermore, CA: Griggs Educational Service, 1976.

Hawkins, James. *Family: Finding Who We Are and How We Belong*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Larson, Jim. *A Church Guide for Strengthening Families: Strategies, Models, Programs, and Resources*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

McGinnis, James B. *Helping Families Care : Practical Ideas for Intergenerational Programs*. Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone Books; St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice, c1989.

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Strommen, Merton P., and Richard A. Hardel. *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 2000.

Korean American History and Family

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APPENDIX C

Organizations in Partnership with Christian Education

Korean American Coalition (KAC)

A non-profit organization based in Los Angeles “to facilitate the Korean American community’s participation in civic, legislative, and political affairs so that it can contribute to become an integral part of the larger American society.” www.kacla.org

Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC)

A non-profit organization “to serve the evolving needs of the Korean American population in the Greater Los Angeles area as well as the multi-ethnic Koreatown community. KYCC’s programs and services are directed toward recently immigrated, economically disadvantaged youth and families and to promote community socioeconomic empowerment.” www.kyccla.org

Korean American Museum (KAM)

A non-profit organization based in Los Angeles dedicated “to preserve Korean American history and culture from the unique and relevant perspective of Korean Americans.” www.kamuseum.org

Asian American Studies Center, UCLA (AASC)

One of the foremost centers for Asian American Studies. Publishes *Amerasian Journal* and other essential resources. www.sscnet.ucla.edu/aasc

Korean American Historical Society (KAHS)

Founded in 1985, KAHS is a non-profit organization dedicated “to enriching the collective memory of Korean Americans through collecting, maintaining, and transmitting the heritage and achievements of Koreans living in the U.S. and abroad.” www.kahs.org

The Korean American Heritage Foundation (KAH)

“Aims to provide information, both historical and current, related to the experiences of Korean American people in the U.S. From the first Korean immigrants who came here in the late 1800’s to the most recent members of the Korean American community, the details about their contributions to American society and American history will expand the story of the people who helped make this nation.” www.koreanamericanheritage.com

Korean American Family Service Center

A non-profit, social services organization established in 1983. Striving “to provide comprehensive, culturally and linguistically sensitive programs and services for children, youth, and families in the Korean American community.” www.apanet.org/members/kafsc.html

Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)

Established in 1983, a non-profit organization in southern California that “provides Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) and other communities with multi-lingual, culturally sensitive services and legal education. Our in-house attorneys and paralegals have developed expertise in a variety of areas, such as immigration and naturalization, workers’ rights, family law and domestic violence, immigrant welfare, voting rights and anti-discrimination and have worked towards building inter-ethnic relations.” www.paplc.org

National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)

A non-profit organization serving to project “a national progressive voice on immigrant rights and civil rights issues through education, organizing, and advocacy.” www.nakasec.org

APPENDIX D

Sample Program

Planning for Education Program

The Youth Group pastor James collaborated with me on planning and leading this education program. He grew up in this church since his immigration in seventh grade and has been serving as a pastor for the past eight years. On our first meeting, we brainstormed necessary and possible education programs based on our understandings of the immigrant family as stated in chapter 2. When a brief outline of the programs was shaped, we shared it with the interviewees for their approval both on the content and proposal dates and time. With their input, we decided on specific dates and times for each activity. Since this program required a holding environment in which everyone feels safe and free to share their deep feelings, we decided to limit the number of participants to six families. Families were asked to register for the entire program with a commitment to attend all meetings. Priority was given to the family of the parents who participated in the interview.

Among the many and diverse needs of Korean American family, we decided to narrow down our focus for this particular program to presenting basic principles of parenting, providing family time for interactions in which they share their stories, thoughts, values, and feelings, and also building upon family rituals. We named the program Parent/Family Enrichment. It consisted of four gatherings (meeting once a month); one for parents alone and three for all family members. Pastor James and I were present in all

sessions, sharing responsibility in presenting and leading the program. The following is a summary of the sessions.

Parent/Family Enrichment Program

Session 1: Self-Image and Self-Esteem¹ (Parent Enrichment)

Goal: to clarify the significance of parental role in children's faith development and to affirm the value of each individual who is created in God's image.

Objectives:

- To describe the parents' role in the development of a child's self-image.
- To list positive characteristics of their children.
- To identify ways to strengthen their child's self-esteem.
- To explore God's affirmation of human dignity.
- To practice expressing positive images of others.
- To initiate the formation of a support group with other families.

Materials needed: pens, papers

1. Welcome all families and briefly introduce about the program. Have the families introduce themselves and why they have chosen to participate in the program.
2. Presentation on the development of self-esteem and the parental role
Parents are like a mirror. Children's self-image is shaped by parents who reflect the children. If parents have a negative view of their children, the children will have low self-esteem and if parents have a positive view of their children, they will build high self-esteem.
3. Write positive characteristics of their children.
4. Presentation on ways to strengthen a child's self-esteem
 - 1) Think about something positive about your child and find ways to tell her/him. 2) Eliminate negative comments. 3) Increase your child's self-esteem by increasing your own self-esteem. 4) Model good self-esteem for your child.

¹ Cheryl Reames. *Parenting: LifeSearch* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994). I chose two chapters from this group resource book and modified them for Korean American families. They are used for sessions 1 and 4.

5. The Bible and Image

Read Genesis 1:27, Psalm 8, and 2 Corinthians 3:18 and write down how God values human beings. God has created human beings in God's image, a likeness or strong resemblance. People have God's qualities in them and parents are to hold a mirror up to children so that they will see God's image in themselves.

6. Write down the qualities of God in yourself.

7. Practice seeing positive image in each other.

Pair up (with spouse or others) and take turns (one minute) expressing verbally what you find positive about your partner. Be specific.

8. Sing "You are born to be loved." (Korean contemporary Christian music)

9. Establish a Covenant for support group.

Pair up with another family that you would like to support and get support from. Discuss how you can provide support. Exchange prayer concerns and pray for each other. Also exchange phone numbers.

10. Evaluation

Evaluation form was handed out and collected at the end of each session. It had the following questions.

By participating in this program,

- 1) *What did you learn about yourself?*
- 2) *What did you learn about your child/children?*
- 3) *What part of the program was helpful/effective?*
- 4) *What change would you suggest to improve this program?*

The general attendance of the families was fairly high although fathers' attendance tended to be lower than the other members. Since the six families were active members in the church and somewhat close to one another, they seemed comfortable and relaxed. The first session went smoothly, and the parents were very attentive and responsive. During the prayer time at the end, some mothers shed tears. After the session ended, some stayed behind and chatted with the leaders or other families about the program and their families. On the evaluation, many parents expressed their gratitude for the invitation to the program. They found biblical affirmation on self-image "powerful" and "encouraging" while their

attitude toward the children “very destructive” in building positive self-esteem. Many realized that they have seen only negative characteristics of their children while neglecting the positive ones.

This session corresponds to the Parent Education approach in its format. By focusing on parents’ role in the development of a child’s self-esteem, the session recognizes the family as the primary socialization context and parents as the primary educators. The sacredness of the family is also emphasized as it cultivates parents to see the qualities of God in their children and in themselves. Practicing to express these qualities verbally is an important dimension of family spirituality. By encouraging families to establish a support group, the session also affirms the notion of an extended family. The families within a faith community are dependent upon one another for support and encouragement.

Session 2: Thanksgiving Dinner and Game² (Family Enrichment)

Goal: For both parents and children to prepare something special for each other and also to learn more about each other through a game.

Objectives:

- For the children to prepare dinner for the parents in appreciation of their love.
- For the parents to make a card for the children and express their perception of their children.
- To share a special family meal prepared by children.
- To express their appreciation for each other verbally.
- To find out about each other through a game.
- To simply enjoy their time together.

Materials needed: meal preparation (one youth-group teacher helped children with planning, shopping, and cooking the meal), papers, pens, old magazines, markers, glue, scissors.

² Adapted from Young Lee Hertig. *Cultural Tug of War: The Korean Immigrant Family and Church in Transition*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 112-13.

1. Since it is thanksgiving month, children prepare simple dinner for parents and serve them with gratitude. While children prepare dinner, parents will make a special card to give to their children. Fill the card with a collage of pictures and words that describes each child.
2. Share meal and cards.
Verbally express gratitude to each other.
3. Parent-Child Game
Prepare two sets of six questions for both parents and children. Write them out on construction paper with colorful markers. When the question is given, the parents and children simultaneously lift up their answers, which they have written on construction paper. The goal of the game is for both a parent a child to get the same answer. Help them to enjoy the game and give a small prize to the family that earns the most points.

Questions about Children:

- 1) What is your son's/daughter's favorite food?
- 2) What is your son's/daughter's favorite music group?
- 3) Who is your son's/daughter's best friend?
- 4) What college does your son/daughter want to go to?
- 5) What does he/she want to major in?
- 6) What is your son's/daughter's hero/heroine?

Questions about Parents:

- 1) What is your father's/mother's favorite food?
 - 2) Who is his/her favorite character in the Bible?
 - 3) Where did he/she first meet your mother/father?
 - 4) What was hi/her favorite subject when he/she was in junior high school?
 - 5) What is your father's/mother's hobby?
 - 6) What is your father's favorite sport/ mother's favorite perfume?
4. Closing: While family members hold hands together, sing "O, I love you with the love of the Lord" and pray.
 5. Evaluation

There was much laughter though out the night. The children were excited to cook spaghetti in the kitchen while the parents worked on the cards. At first, parents seemed reluctant to make a creative card, but along the way, they were enjoying it. Parents were

cooperative in suggesting appropriate words and picking out pictures for other parents. Meal time was fun. Each family had their own table. Kids were giggling over the cards and the conversation between the parents and the children continued through out the dinner. Game time was also fun. The questions were very simple and required basic information, but many did not get the right answers. However, it was fun learning about one another through a game. After the session, they exchanged many “thanks” and hugs. On the evaluation, many parents confessed that they did not know much about their children; rather they had their own ideas about the children. It was an opportunity to realize that they have to listen more to their children and speak at them less, as well as refrain from imposing their own ideas upon their children. The children also stated that they had no interest in their parents, but have learned a lot about them and were willing to know more. Some thought the game time was too short while parents wanted a chance to have a deeper conversation.

This session can be a representation of a Cell Gathering approach. It is an intergenerational and multifamily gathering that centers on a holiday from Christian tradition. The main goal of this session is to have a fun time, expressing gratitude and learning more about each other. Again, this goal illuminates the sacredness of family as the members learn to enjoy one another and grow in their relationships. Through expressing gratitude and sharing emotions, they learn to communicate better. In future gatherings, activities will be added to engage family members into to a deeper conversation.

Session 3: Celebrating Advent/ Christmas³ (Family Enrichment)

Goal: To identify and share family Advent/Christmas traditions and encourage families to create a family ritual.

Objectives:

- To share a family meal and also personal stories of Advent/Christmas.
- To share family stories with other families.
- To identify various symbols of Advent/Christmas.
- To collaborate to create a family Advent wreath and a Christmas banner.
- To celebrate the Second Sunday in Advent using the newly-made wreath.
- To create or enhance family Advent/Christmas ritual or tradition.

Materials needed: poster boards, markers, Styrofoam circles. Cut greens, fine wire, four purple candles and a large white candle for each family, extra decorative items, fabric for banner (felt or burlap), fabric markers and paint, sample designs of symbols/drawings for banner, dowels, string)

1. Christmas Stories
During pot-luck dinner, have the family sit together and each member share his/her favorite part, experience, or tradition of Advent/Christmas.
2. After dinner, each family selects one or two special traditions and they share it with the whole group.
3. The tradition of Advent
The leader makes a brief presentation of various symbols of advent, including their origins and meanings. Give out a worksheet with symbols of Advent/Christmas so that families can take notes. (e.g.: Christmas tree, Jesse's tree, cresh, angel, banner, etc.) Present with either pictures or artifacts.
4. Make an Advent wreath and a Christmas banner, using different symbols for the latter. Family members work together to make the family's unique wreath and a banner.
5. Celebration of the Second Sunday in Advent
The leaders will guide families to a brief celebration for the second Sunday in Advent. The celebration will include:
 - The youngest member of each family will light the first candle, and the second

³ Adapted from Donald Griggs and Patricia Griggs, *Generations Learning Together* (Livermore, CA: Griggs Educational Service, 1976).

youngest the second candle.

- Sing Advent hymn “O come, O come Immanuel.”
- Scripture Reading from Isaiah 9: 6-7.
- Closing prayer by a parent

6. Create Family Ritual or Tradition.

Each family will decide on two things to do for Advent/Christmas time as a family unit.

7. Evaluation

Conversation over dinner went okay. Everyone seemed to listen very attentively.

They also enjoyed listening to the stories of other families; some stories were funny while some were solemn. There were much discussion over making the wreath and the banner, and every member tried to contribute to the choice of symbols. Fathers were more inactive than other members, but they gave their full attention. They seemed to enjoy their time together, sharing stories and making the wreath and the banner. Some parents were surprised to find out how their children have recalled “forgotten” parts of their past stories, and how much their children valued what seemed insignificant to the parents. Many children have learned about Advent/Christmas in Korea during their parents’ time. Most families expressed their gratitude for learning the meanings of symbols and creating their own wreath and banner. Some mentioned that they could use a print-out ‘Advent/Christmas ritual suggestions.’

Sharing Christmas stories incorporates many underlying principles of the Resilience Model. It affirms the sacredness of family life since it values each members’ experiences and God’s grace revealed in them. Listening to stories is also related to acknowledging family diversity. Instead of imposing standard or ideal family stories, it affirms families the way they are; their own stories become the source of energy. Telling their own stories

becomes a way to identify their strengths. Stories also lead to appreciating Korean ethnicity. Since stories include elements of Korean tradition, these cultural traditions are also acknowledged and valued. Creating a family ritual for Christmas promotes family as the context of faith education. Family becomes the primary socialization context where Christian faith is celebrated and preserved. Hence, this session can be used for the Family Life approach.

Session 4: Conflict Resolution and Family Strength (Family Enrichment)

Goal: To be aware of various ways to approach conflicts and to practice solving conflicts in healthy ways.

Objectives:

- To identify various responses to conflict.
- To explore biblical image of peacemaking and conflict resolution.
- To identify and describe obstacles to good communication in Korean families and ways to improve them.
- To identify healthy and successful ways of resolving conflicts from experiences of family conflict.
- To participate in the ritual of commitment to approach family conflicts with positive attitude and responsibility.

Materials needed: poster boards, markers, black/white board, a small stone for each person

1. Presentation on Approaches to Conflicts.
Conflicts arise in families and it is the goal of a Christian family to solve them in a healthy way. Children learn parents' ways of dealing with conflicts. There are different ways of expressing angry feelings, some are constructive and others are destructive. Discuss both constructive and destructive ways of handling angry feelings. A constructive way is channeling thoughts to positive directions. (e.g. angry at bad grades can lead to better study habit)
2. Introduce five responses to conflict defined in *Stress and the Healthy Family*: avoidance, competition, accommodation, cooperation, and collaboration.

3. The Bible and Conflict Resolution:

Read Matthew 5:9; 5:21-24. Peacemakers are those who create peace in the midst of hatred, helping persons to reconcile. True peacemaking requires just solution for all parties. What insights do the passages offer regarding peace, conflict, and reconciliation?

4. Brainstorm elements in Korean families that interfere with healthy ways of dealing with conflicts. What are obstacles to good communication? How can these negative elements be improved or removed? Make a chart on the board.

5. Family Strength

By family, recall a time when your family handled a conflict in a healthy way. What factors within the family (or traits of family members) contribute to the resolution? What outside help did your family receive? List them on a post board. Have prayer time by family, holding hands together. Make commitment to do one's best to respond to family conflicts in healthy ways.

6. Closing

Make a pile of stones, representing conflicts. Each person takes a stone as a reminder to give one's best effort to resolve conflicts in a just and peaceful way. When everyone bears a small burden, conflicts will resolve as the stone pile has disappeared. Sing together "My peace, I give unto you" as a closing.

7. Evaluation

Since the topic was conflicts, the overall mood was not as bright as prior sessions.

They mentioned many common ways of dealing with conflicts in Korean families, and also made good suggestions for improvement. They were very focused through out the session.

Closing was a very solemn time. Because the issue was a sensitive one, Pastor James and I were very cautious, and we made it clear that conflicts were a natural part of family life.

Many parents found the five responses to conflict very useful. Some mentioned that they did now know their approaches to conflicts were negative and had affected other family members. Kids also stated that they always blamed parents, but they have learned that they were also responsible for resolving conflicts. Recalling family's conflict resolution was helpful to many families because it gave them an opportunity to analyze their ways of

dealing with conflicts. After the session, almost all parents came up to us individually and shared a word or two. They were mostly grateful for the program and found it very helpful. They asked for a follow-up program or a second chance for other families. Many expressed that they have gained confidence in themselves and were challenged for new learning.

This intergenerational session provides a practical approach to conflict resolution. By presenting theories on conflict and responses to it, the program highlights key processes of resilient families, particularly communication and problem-solving processes. Families look for healthy ways to address conflict resolution from their own family life. As they name healthy family traits and outside help from their own family's conflict resolution cases, they identify both inner and outer resources; they claim their own strengths. It is a powerful way to promote family resilience. This program engages in the past, present, and future. Recognizing the present issue of generational conflicts, they go back to their own family experiences as well as the biblical tradition as they are encouraged to reflect upon the teachings of Jesus. Based on the insights from these past traditions, they make action plans for the future regarding how to deal with conflicts.

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